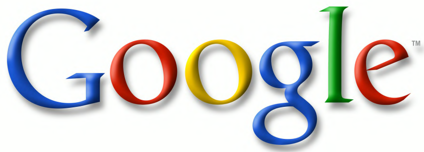


This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

27 A 14ª/3

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE HISTORY OF INDIA.

VOLUME III.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

HISTORY OF INDIA,

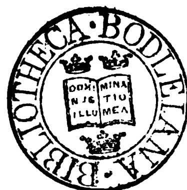
FROM

THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE CLOSE OF
LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION.

BY

JOHN CLARK MARSHMAN.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, READER & DYER.
1867.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

226 f. 73*

Digitized by Google

HARRISON AND SONS, PRINTERS IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY,
ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

Digitized by Google

NOTICE.

THE small proportion of the present work which has been allotted to the Hindoo and Mahomedan period of Indian history has been the subject of remark by those who have honoured the previous volumes with their notice. The author would therefore embrace the present opportunity of explaining that it was intimated to him by the Syndicate of the University of Calcutta that they had adopted Mr. Elphinstone's standard work in reference to that early period, and desired the present work to commence where he had left off, with the history of the British Empire in India. He was happy to be relieved from the necessity of going over ground which had been so fully occupied by that eminent writer, and cheerfully reduced the volume he had already compiled to the dimensions of a simple introduction.

1st *November*, 1867.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

CHAPTER XXX.

LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK'S ADMINISTRATION, 1828—1835.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI.

Lord William Bentinck's Administrative Reforms—Material Progress, 1828—1835.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CHARTER OF 1833—SIR CHARLES METCALFE'S ADMINISTRATION—BENEVOLENT EXERTIONS OF THE COMPANY'S GOVERNMENT, 1833—1836.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LORD AUCKLAND'S ADMINISTRATION—THE AFGHAN EXPEDITION, 1836—1842.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Lord Auckland's Administration—The Afghan Expedition, 1838—1842.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Lord Auckland's Administration—The Afghan Expedition—Miscellaneous Notices, 1841—1842.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S ADMINISTRATION—CLOSE OF THE AFGHAN WAR, 1842.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Lord Ellenborough's Administration—Sinde and Gwalior Wars, 1842—1844.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Lord Hardinge's Administration, 1844—1848.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION—SECOND SIKH WAR, 1848—1849.

CHAPTER XL.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION—THE SECOND SIKH WAR—THE SECOND BURMESE WAR—THE SANTAL OUTBREAK, 1849—1855.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLI.

Lord Dalhousie's Administration—Transaction with Native Princes, 1848—1854.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLII.

Lord Dalhousie's Administration—Oude—Administrative and Material Improvements—Conclusion, 1848—56.

Digitized by Google

THE HISTORY OF INDIA.

CHAPTER XXX.

LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK'S ADMINISTRATION, 1828—1835.

Lord William Bentinck's Administration, 1828.

THE claims of Lord William Bentinck were at length recognized by the Court of Directors, and the stigma which had been unjustly cast on his character by his abrupt and harsh removal from Madras in 1806, was effaced by the gift of the Governor-Generalship. He was sworn in at the India House in July, 1827, while his relative, Mr. Canning, who had promoted his nomination, was Prime Minister; but the lamented decease of that statesman a few days after brought into power those members of his party who had been opposed to his elevation, and Lord William suspended his departure till he was satisfied that they were not disposed to object to his appointment. He sailed in February, and reached Calcutta on the 4th July, 1828. His administration of seven years, which forms one of the brightest periods in the history of British India, commenced under the most unfavourable circumstances. The Burmese war had not only saddled the treasury with a loan to the extent of ten crores of rupees, but created an annual deficit of a crore; and the new Government was constrained at once to enter upon the unpopular duty of retrenchment.

Digitized by Google

Reduction of Allowances, 1828.

Immediately on his arrival two committees were appointed to investigate the increase of expenditure in the civil and military establishments, and to suggest the means of bringing it back to the standard of 1822. The sweeping reductions which the Court of Directors had already made in the strength of the army left little for the military committee to do except to curtail individual allowances, though they were in no case excessive, and in many cases inadequate. In the civil departments the allowances of the civilians presented a more legitimate field for revision. During the previous thirty-five years the only two items which had never experienced any diminution, but on the contrary exhibited a constant tendency to increase, were the public debt and the pay of the civil service. To select one example by way of illustration: the remuneration of an opium agent, for duties which required no mind and little labour, had been gradually augmented to 75,000 rupees a-year. Lord William Bentinck cut it down to a level with the salary of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in England. Some offices were abolished, a few were doubled up, and the income of others was reduced, but the retrenchments did not affect the aggregate allowances of the service to a greater extent than six per cent. It was still the best paid service in the world, enjoying an annual income of ninety lacs of rupees, which, divided among four hundred and sixteen officers, gave each civilian, from the member of Council to the writer, an average allowance of more than 20,000 rupees a-year. But the reductions effected by Lord William Bentinck, combined with his stern resolution to constrain every man to do his duty, punctually and efficiently, created a feeling of irritation in the ranks of the service beyond all former example, and subjected him to insults which severely taxed his habitual equanimity.

The Half Batta Order, 1828.

Of the measures of reduction which Lord William Bentinck was constrained to carry out, none was found to create so much animosity as the half batta order. Soon after the beginning of the century an arrangement had

Digitized by Google

been proposed which assured the officers of the army full batta in cantonments in the lower provinces. It bore the character of a compromise, and was considered by them in the light of a sacred compact. It did not, however, meet with the approval of the India House, and directions were issued successively to Lord Hastings and to Lord Amherst, to reduce the batta allowance by one half. Both the Governors-General deemed it their duty to suspend the execution of the order pending a reference to the Court of Directors, but they simply repeated their injunctions in more peremptory language. Their last despatch on the subject reached Calcutta soon after the arrival of Lord William Bentinck, who was then for the first time put in possession of their wishes, and issued an order in November, 1828, to curtail the batta allowance at all stations within four hundred miles of Calcutta. This measure kindled a flame throughout the army, which at one time threatened to consume the bonds of obedience. A word from the officers at that moment, and the whole Bengal army would, it was firmly believed, have risen to a man. One officer went so far as to declare on his honour that if an enemy were to appear in the field, he did not believe there was a single officer who would give, or a regiment which would obey the order to march. The statement was doubtless exaggerated, but it will serve to show the irritation which then pervaded the army, and which subjected Lord William Bentinck to such gross personal insults from the officers as no Governor-General had ever before experienced. An attempt was made to form representative committees in the army, on the principle which had been adopted by the mutineers in 1796, but it was peremptorily forbidden by the Commander-in-chief, Lord Combermere, though he did not hesitate to declare that he considered the order itself unjust, and inconsistent with the implied conditions of the service. The Court of Directors were exasperated by this expression of his opinion to such an extent as to intimate that he would have been immediately superseded, if he had not already resigned their service. Lord William Bentinck felt that it was

Digitized by Google

beyond his power to suspend the execution of the order, though he considered it unnecessary, impolitic, and unjust, but he transmitted all the memorials of the army to the Court of Directors, stating that "if it had been a new case, he would have assumed the utmost latitude of discretion; but, after the Court had for the third time reiterated their orders, no alternative was left to him but to obey them." Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was emphatically the friend of the army, had recently been raised to Council, and fully concurred with Lord William Bentinck that the order was one which could not have been disobeyed, under existing circumstances, without assuming that the executive Government in Calcutta was the supreme power in the empire. The Court of Directors denounced the tone and spirit of the memorials as subversive of every principle of military obedience. They asserted their right, in common with all Governments, to regulate the allowances of the public servants, and they signified their determination to enforce the order they had issued. This resolution met with the full concurrence of the Duke of Wellington. Considering the pass to which matters had arrived, it was necessary for the maintenance of discipline, to enforce the order, although it was an egregious blunder. At the period when it was first issued, the Indian treasury was full to repletion, and the saving created by these cheese parings would not have increased the surplus revenue by more than one per cent. The reduction was, under every aspect, impolitic; it affected the most expensive stations, and created an invidious distinction between the officers of different arms in the same service. Dumdum, the head-quarters of the artillery, was within the fatal circle of four hundred miles, and the officers who had won their commissions after a severe scientific competition, and who formed the élite of the army, were condemned to reduced allowances; but those of the cavalry, filled with the relatives and connections of the Directors, which was never cantoned in the lower provinces, were exempted. The irritation, moreover, was annually revived, as each regiment was required in succession to take its turn, as a

Digitized by Google

matter of equity, at the penal stations. It appears strange that so astute a body as the Court of Directors should have risked the attachment and confidence of a noble army for a saving of less than two lacs of rupees a-year, but they were not exempt from the infirmity of occasional spasms of *zid*. It appears still more astonishing that during the thirty succeeding years in which they retained the government of India, they had not the magnanimity, if only as a graceful acknowledgment of the services of the army in twenty hard-earned victories, to rescind an order which created perpetual irritation. It was only after the government had passed into the hands of the Crown that this act of injustice and impolicy was redressed.

Opium, 1830. In the attempt to adjust the finances of India, the decrease of allowances afforded a larger scope for exertion than the increase of revenue; but it was not overlooked. Opium has always presented a very elastic source of wealth to the Government of India. The scheme of raising a revenue from the manufacture of it originated with Warren Hastings, and was matured by Sir John Shore, through whose diligent efforts the purity of the drug was improved to such a degree that a chest with the Company's trade mark and seal passed like a bank note, without question, in China and throughout the Eastern Archipelago. In the Gangetic provinces it was grown in Behar and Benares, under the restrictions of a close monopoly. It was also indigenous in Malwa, and, on the restoration of tranquillity to that rich and distracted province by the victories of Lord Hastings, the native capitalists eagerly embarked in the cultivation of an article which yielded colossal returns. The importation of Malwa opium into Bombay was strictly prohibited, but the interdict was evaded by conveying it across the desert to Kurrachee, in Sinde, and thence to the Portuguese ports of Diu and Daman on the western coasts, and, eventually, in vessels under Portuguese colours to China and the east. The profits of the Company's monopoly were seriously affected by this competition, and various plans

Digitized by Google

were devised to check it, but they were chiefly remarkable for the absence of either wisdom or equity. The purchase of the whole crop in Malwa, which was adopted in one season, entailed a loss to the extent of more than half-a-crore of rupees. The restrictions, moreover, which it was sought to impose on the native states in Central India, regarding the culture of the poppy, were found to interfere unjustly with their independent action, and often to occasion serious conflicts. Lord William Bentinck put an end to the difficulty by establishing a system of licences for the direct conveyance of the opium from the provinces in Central India in which it was raised, to the port of Bombay, and a progressive revenue has thus been established, without annoyance either to prince or people.

Rent-free Tenures, 1828.

The final and successful effort which was made to recover the land revenue which had been alienated from the state by fraudulent deeds, belongs to Lord William Bentinck's administration, though the regulation itself was passed immediately before his arrival. The native governments had been in the habit of making grants of land to individuals and to establishments, lay or ecclesiastical, free from the payment of rent; in other words, to bestow on them the public share of the produce of the lands. Some of these grants to charities and religious endowments were consecrated by time, but, generally, rent free tenures in the Deccan were resumed on every succession to the throne, and frequently more than once during the same reign. The same practice was common in Hindostan. Thus, the Nabob of Oude when constrained by Lord Wellesley in 1801 to commute his annual subsidy for a territorial cession, sought to compensate himself by resuming the grants which had thus been made by his predecessors. In the confusion occasioned by the dissolution of the Mogul empire this royal prerogative was usurped by the governors of provinces, and sometimes by their subordinate officers. On assuming the management of the revenue the Council in Calcutta announced that all grants made previous to the acquisition of the Dewanee in 1765, should

Digitized by Google

be deemed valid; but as there existed no register of these titles, the zemindars, farmers, and revenue officers set to work unscrupulously to fabricate and to antedate them. A tenth of the public revenue appears thus to have been alienated from the support of the state during the infancy and inexperience of the Company's administration. A vigorous native Government would have summarily resumed all such grants, but the Regulations of 1793 simply reserved the right of imposing the public assessment on them after their illegality had been established in a court of law. The laborious duty of conducting these investigations was imposed on the Collector, and neglected. A more stringent Regulation was passed in 1819, which empowered him to call for written documents, to examine witnesses, and to decide the validity of the title, with the approbation of the Board of Revenue, leaving the proprietor to make his appeal to the civil courts. But the Collector found himself thwarted at every step in the performance of this invidious task, by the mercenary officers of his own court, who were bribed by the holders of the lands, and he became lukewarm in the performance of it. Few cases were taken up, and the decisions of the courts on appeal were so dilatory and withal so contradictory, as to be equally unsatisfactory to the appellant and to Government. It became necessary, therefore, either to relinquish altogether the pursuit of this lost revenue, or to adopt a more vigorous course to recover it. Accordingly, three weeks before the arrival of Lord William Bentinck, a Regulation, long remembered as III of 1828, was passed, by which special Commissioners, selected from the ablest and most experienced officers in the judicial service, were appointed to hear and determine appeals from the decisions of the Collectors, who were stimulated to greater activity under the influence of the new system. These energetic proceedings produced great dissatisfaction among those who were affected by the resumptions. They pleaded that the difficulty of adducing evidence to establish the validity of their titles had increased with the lapse of time; that many

Digitized by Google

documents had disappeared through the humidity of the climate and the ravages of the white ants, and that in the course of several generations, lands, though originally obtained by fraud, had been purchased, *bonâ fide*, and at an enhanced value, by their present proprietors. There can be no doubt that the resumption of these lands, or rather of the rent of them,—as the parties were in no cases dispossessed, inflicted great unpopularity on the Government at the time, though by no means to the extent which has been assumed, but to affirm, as some have done, that it was one of the leading causes of the great mutiny of the sepoys thirty years after, is one of the most gratuitous of assertions. The natives of the country, though they had been accustomed to submit meekly to the wholesale and indiscriminate resumption of such lands by the arbitrary will of their native princes, resented the resumptions when made by a foreign Government which had never been popular, and they arraigned its justice and moderation; but the irritation did not outlive the generation affected by them, and had passed out of memory long before the crisis of the mutiny arose. The addition made to the rent-roll of the state by this procedure, amounted to about thirty lacs of rupees a year, while the machinery of investigation cost eighty lacs.

The Cole Insurrection, 1832.

The political and military events of Lord William Bentinck's administration were of minor importance compared with those of a previous or a succeeding period, when thrones and dynasties were overthrown, and the map of India was reconstructed. There was the usual amount of chronic turbulence among the border tribes on the various points of our extensive territory, but it did not affect the stability of the empire. The Cole insurrection, however, involved operations of some magnitude. The Coles, the Dangars, the Santals, and other cognate tribes, the aborigines of the country are believed to have receded before the conquering Hindoos into the hills and fastnesses south-west of Bengal; and in that wild region they have continued for ages to maintain their primitive language, habits, and superstitions, as well

Digitized by Google

as their physical appearance and, in some cases, their wild independence. Their condition had been little affected by the political or religious revolutions in Hindostan. Of these forest tribes, some were under the loose authority of the Rajpoot zemindars who had gradually succeeded in obtaining a footing in their country. Some of them lived by the chase, but others obtained a subsistence by the rude cultivation of the open and fertile tracts embosomed in their hills. The zemindars endeavoured to improve their revenues by settling a more industrious class of farmers from Bengal and Behar on the lands, but the interlopers became an object of intense hatred to the aborigines. The cumbrous Regulations of the Bengal Presidency had unhappily been introduced into the province, to the great annoyance both of the zemindars and the ryots. The general feeling of discontent occasioned by these proceedings was exasperated by the insolence and rapacity of the Bengalee underlings who had flocked in with the establishment of our institutions, and monopolized every office. In 1832, the whole country was in a state of insurrection. The vengeance of the Coles was directed against the zemindars who oppressed them, and more especially against the foreign settlers. Their fields were laid waste, their villages given up to the flames, and more than a thousand were put to death before it was possible to assemble troops. A considerable force of horse, foot, and artillery was sent into the province. The insurgents assembled in thousands, but were armed only with bows, arrows, and axes, and the military operations were confined to scouring the country, burning down the hamlets, and endeavouring to apprehend the leaders. There was no real opposition, but great slaughter; and as none of the Company's officers were acquainted with the language of the Coles, not a few of them were cut down as they were thronging to the camp to implore mercy. All the tribes at length threw themselves on the consideration of the Government, and the troops were withdrawn. A chief of the Choars, a kindred race in the neighbouring province of Manbhoom, rose in revolt immediately after, but

Digitized by Google

an overwhelming force, consisting of no fewer than four regiments of infantry, besides irregular horse, and some guns, was poured into the country and speedily extinguished the rebellion. It was not, however, without its countervailing advantages. Lord William Bentinck was induced, in compassion to the people, to relieve them from the incubus of a code altogether unsuited to the simplicity of their habits, and he formed the districts into a non-regulation province, and placed it under the control of a Commissioner.

Insurrection of Teetoo Meer, 1831.

Another insurrection attracted notice about the same time from the singular circumstances of its occurrence within fifteen miles of Government House in Calcutta. Syud Ahmed, a Mahomedan reformer and fanatic, of whom further particulars will be given hereafter, had collected numerous disciples in Bengal, and more particularly in the district of Baraset. The superior sanctity they assumed, the intolerance they manifested towards the Mahomedans who refused to join their sect, and their hostility to the Hindoos rendered them an object of general aversion, and some of their Hindoo zemindars had inflicted fines upon them. They made their appeal to the Magistrate, but the dilatory proceedings of his court exhausted their patience, and, under the direction of one Teetoo Meer, a Mahomedan mendicant, they took the law into their own hands. They proclaimed a religious war against the Hindoos, by the usual process of defiling a temple with the blood of a cow, and forcing its flesh down the throats of the brahmins, and constraining them to pronounce the formula of the Prophet's creed. They then proceeded to plunder and burn down villages and factories, and to put to death all who ventured to oppose them. The émeute gained strength from two ineffectual efforts on the part of the Magistrate to quell it, and in the peaceful province of Bengal, which had not seen the smoke of an enemy's camp for more then seventy years, two regiments of infantry with a body of horse and some guns were summoned to the field. They came up with the insurgents near Hooghly; a few rounds of grape

Digitized by Google

drove them into a stockade they had erected, where, contrary to all expectation, they defended themselves with great resolution for an hour, and put to death sixteen of their assailants. Many of the fanatics were slain, and the remainder made prisoners, and the insurrection subsided as rapidly as it had arisen.

Annexation of Cachar, 1832. Lord William Bentinck's administration was marked by the addition of two principalities to the Company's dominions, but of such insignificant extent as to escape observation and censure. The raja of the little province of Cachar in the hills on the north-east frontier of Bengal, had been rescued from the grasp of the Burmese in 1825, and restored to power. He was murdered in 1832, and, as he left no legitimate successor, Lord William Bentinck yielded to the general wish of the people, and gave them the benefit of the Company's government. This unnoticed nook of the great empire has since acquired a commercial importance by the application of British capital and enterprise to its improvement. The forests have been cleared, and the hills covered with tea plantations, on which large sums have been expended.

Reduction and annexation of Coorg, 1834. The conquest and annexation of Coorg was the deliberate act of the most pacific of Governors-General. This province lies on the Malabar coast, between Mysore and the sea, and comprises an area of about fifteen hundred square miles, no portion of which is less than three thousand feet above the level of the sea. The population is scanty, and the country itself had never been deemed of any importance; but circumstances have invested it with a peculiar interest. At the close of the last century, the raja was the most chivalrous character of his age in India, and defended his domains with such perseverance and gallantry against the overwhelming force of the Mysore rulers, as to obtain the hearty commendations of Lord Cornwallis and Lord Wellesley. From the latter he received the gift of a splendid sword, which was long preserved with pride among the family heir-looms.

Digitized by Google

His descendant, the princess Gourumna, came to England in company with her father, and embraced the Christian religion, the Queen standing her sponsor at the baptismal font. At the commencement of the war with Tippoo in 1791, it was deemed important by the British authorities to obtain a military position in Coorg, and a treaty was concluded with the raja, Vira Raja, which secured his assistance and the resources of his country, and granted him the guarantee of his independence on the part of the British Government. The arrangement was concluded by Mr. Taylor, the Company's agent at Tellicherry; and such were the lax notions of religion which prevailed at the Madras Presidency in those days, that he took God, the sun, the moon, and the earth to witness the execution of the deed. The raja died in 1809 and was succeeded by his brother, who bequeathed the throne to his son Vira raja in 1820. Few princes, even in India, have ever exhibited a more atrocious example of cruelty and ferocity. His first act was to put to death all those who had thwarted his views before he came to the throne. To prevent the possibility of being superseded, he directed all his royal kinsmen, twelve in number, to be taken into the jungle and decapitated. He never scrupled to take the life of any one who was obnoxious to him, and he became the object of universal dread to his courtiers and his subjects. He manifested a peculiar hatred of the British Government, and prohibited all intercourse between his people and Englishmen, which had the effect of concealing his conduct from observation. In 1832, his sister and her husband fled for their lives, and revealed the tale of his barbarities to the British Resident at Mysore, who proceeded in person to the capital, and endeavoured, but without success, to bring the raja to reason. A native envoy was then sent to remonstrate with him, but he was seized and placed in confinement. The raja, at the same time, addressed letters to the Governor of Madras, and even to the Governor-General, couched in terms of extraordinary insolence, and organized his little force for a conflict with British power. Lord William Bentinck, finding him deaf to all admonition,

Digitized by Google

resolved to treat him as a public enemy, and issued a proclamation, recounting his cruelties and oppressions, and announcing that he had ceased to reign. A force of about 6,000 men was directed to enter the country simultaneously from the east, west, north, and south, under the general command of Colonel Lindsay. Advancing from the eastward, he succeeded in penetrating the intricate and perilous defiles leading to the capital, where the mere interjection of felled trees from the neighbouring forest might have completely blocked up his path. He entered the capital and planted the British standard on its ramparts on the 6th April, 1834. But the Coorg troops resisted the divisions which were advancing into their country from other directions with the same energy and courage which had been exhibited in the defence of their independence against the veterans of Hyder and Tippoo. Two of the British columns were repeatedly repulsed by these gallant highlanders, and many officers and more than two hundred of the men fell beneath their weapons. If the generalship of the Coorg commander had corresponded with the valour of his men, the campaign might with ease have been protracted till the rains set in, in which case the British army would have been obliged to withdraw from a scene where disease would have annihilated their strength. But the raja was as cowardly as he was cruel, and surrendered to General Fraser, the political agent, who issued a proclamation, under the orders of the Governor-General, annexing the territory of Coorg to the Company's dominions "in consideration of the unanimous wish of the people." The General was an officer on the Madras establishment, and he took on himself to humour the religious notions of the Hindoos by prohibiting the slaughter of kine throughout Coorg, though he was not ignorant that the British Government—except in the fatal instance of Rangoon—had invariably refused to sanction so preposterous a concession to native prejudices. The country of Coorg was overlooked for more than twenty years, when it was discovered to be one of those mountain tracts suitable for the residence of Europeans and

Digitized by Google

the cultivation of coffee, and it has now become one of the most valuable and prosperous sections of the great national estate in India.

Non-interference Policy, 1828—34.

The policy of Lord William Bentinck in reference to the native states was regulated at first by the principle of non-interference, which was still in the ascendant in Leadenhall-street, and on which some brief remarks may not be redundant. For centuries, the idea of a paramount power in India had been so familiar to the native mind, that its existence came to be considered a matter of necessity. In his minute on the Bhurtpore crisis, Sir Charles Metcalfe had stated that the obligation to maintain the legal succession of the heir in that principality devolved on us as the supreme guardians of general tranquillity, law, and right in India. But the Court of Directors lost no time in repudiating this doctrine, and laid positive and repeated injunctions on the Government of India to abstain from all interference with the native princes, beyond what was indispensable to secure the punctual payment of their respective tributes. The British Government in India was thus placed in the unseemly position of a powerful and importunate creditor, instead of that of a beneficent guardian; and its interference with the princes had all the appearance of being regulated by its own pecuniary interests, and not by any regard for the welfare of the country. During the early period of Lord William Bentinck's government, his proceedings were shaped by the policy of the India House, of which he did not disapprove, and they form the least satisfactory portion of his administration. That policy was not, however, without an apparent justification, as a glance at the progress of events will show.

Remarks on our position in India, 1834.

To retain our standing in India, it was necessary to secure a position which should enable us to control the inherent elements of anarchy. There was no alternative between the decay and the aggrandizement of our power. If we had refused te advance we must have submitted to recede. This fact is clearly demonstrated in the

Digitized by Google

memorable remarks of Lord William Bentinck: "To the policy of Lord Wellesley succeeded other policy and other measures; the renunciation of conquests, the abandonment of influence and power, the maintenance of a system strictly neutral, defensive, not interfering, pacific, according to the full spirit of that enactment declaring that 'to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of the nation.' The impossibility of adhering to this beautiful theory was soon manifested, and subsequent events have all shown that, however moderate our views, however determined we may be not to extend our limits, it has been utterly out of our power to stand still. Such have been the restless, plundering habits which belong to this great Indian society, such its very natural jealousy and apprehension of our power, that, after a series of unprovoked aggressions, Lord Hastings at last, in 1817, brought to a completion that system of policy which the great genius and foresight of Lord Wellesley had originally planned, and would have probably accomplished twenty-five years before, had he remained in India." But it was found that the system of subsidiary and tributary alliances, while it secured our supremacy, had an inevitable tendency to render the native Governments weak and oppressive. The native prince became indolent by trusting to strangers for security, and cruel and avaricious from the assurance that he had nothing to dread from the hatred of his subjects as long as his protection was guaranteed by our irresistible power. From time immemorial the remedy for an oppressive government in India, when it had reached a point beyond the power of endurance, was a popular rebellion, the result of which was the subversion of the dynasty and the establishment of a new family on the throne. Any such remedy, however, was rendered absolutely impracticable by the presence of a British force, which supported the throne against every opponent, domestic as well as foreign. The dignity, the energy, and the capacity of the native princes withered under this parasitical connection with a paramount

Digitized by Google

power. The Court of Directors deemed it wise, if not also benevolent, to preserve these attributes of power, and to render the princes efficient instruments of Government. They considered that this object could be attained by a rigid system of non-interference in their affairs. But this theory was found as impracticable as the "beautiful theory" of Mr. Dundas, in 1783, which denounced all extension of the British dominions. During half-a-century, there was scarcely an instance of a prince, living under the safeguard of British protection, who rose above the debasing influences of the zenana, and showed any talent for governing. It was only when a native state happened to be blessed with the services of statesmen like Salar Jung, or Dinkur Rao, that the interference of the paramount power became redundant, except to defeat the intrigues for his dismissal. Circumstances were constantly arising to baffle this principle of non-interference. We found it often necessary to interpose our authority in a contest for the throne, or to prevent a course of action tending to produce a conflict of which we should have to bear the brunt. We were bound to correct a system of misrule which might lead to a failure of resources, and entail heavy responsibilities on us. Nor could we always forget that our protection of the prince from the indignation of his subjects, implied the obligation of protecting the subjects from the oppressions of the ruler. The rule of non-intervention was therefore, from the inexorable necessity of circumstances, almost as often in abeyance as in operation, and it was this vacillating policy during Lord William Bentinck's administration, which lowered the character, and diminished the usefulness of the British Government. In some cases he refused to interfere where he might have prevented disorder and misery; in others, he has been deemed to have interfered too far. At Gwalior, he declined to use his influence, and the state was brought to the verge of revolution and civil war. In Coorg, he extinguished the dynasty; in the case of Mysore, he assumed the government of the country.

Digitized by Google

Affairs of Mysore, 1799—1809.

The kingdom of Mysore, it will be remembered, was created out of the spoils of Tippoo by Lord Wellesley in 1799, and conferred on one of the descendants of the old royal family. This measure was strenuously opposed at the time by Sir Thomas Munro, one of the most profound statesmen the Company's service has ever produced. He advised the partition of the whole of the conquered country between the Nizam and the Company He urged that the inhabitants had long been accustomed to the government of strangers; that they had no national spirit or antipathies to stir them up to resistance, and that they beheld a change of rulers with perfect indifference. He argued that no political advantage could be gained by dragging the descendant of the raja of Mysore from obscurity. "If," he said, "we had found a prince in captivity who had once enjoyed power, a proper regard for humanity, and the supposed prejudices of the nation in favour of one who had once been their sovereign, would no doubt have pleaded strongly for his restoration; but no such motive now calls upon us to invest the present raja, a boy of six years old, with royalty; for neither he nor his father, nor his grandfather, ever exercised or knew what it was; and long before the usurpation of Hyder, the rajas had been held as state prisoners by their delways or ministers. No attachment remains towards the family among the natives, for it has long been despised and forgotten." This communication did not reach Lord Wellesley till after he had made his arrangements for the elevation of the boy; but he did not hesitate to declare that "the territories thus placed under the nominal sovereignty of the raja of Mysore constituted substantially an integral portion of our own dominions." The treaty of cession was, therefore, made by the British Government alone, to the exclusion of the Nizam. It was, moreover, concluded with the raja personally, without that allusion to heirs and successors, which had been inserted in the treaties formed by Lord Wellesley with the Peshwa, the raja of Nagpore, the Nizam, and Sindia. This

Digitized by Google

significant omission in the case of Mysore was supplied, it has been said, by the clause which makes the treaty binding "as long as the sun and moon shall endure." This expression is employed in cases where treaties were made expressly to include heirs and successors. That portion of the conquered territory which was assigned to the Nizam and the Company was to "be held in full right and sovereignty for ever," whereas the raja of Mysore was simply "to possess the territory described." It was clearly intended by Lord Wellesley to be a personal and not an hereditary fief. The power of resuming the grant of the kingdom was reserved in the 4th article of the treaty: "Whenever the Governor-General in Council shall have reason to apprehend a failure in the funds destined for the maintenance of the military force—seven lacs of pagodas a-year—he shall have full power and right either to introduce regulations and ordinances as he shall deem expedient for the internal management and the collection of the revenues of the country, or to assume and bring under the direct management of the servants of the Company such part or parts of the territory as shall appear to him necessary to render such funds efficient and available either in peace or war." The object of this assumption was defined in the next article to be, not only "to secure the efficiency of the said military funds, but also to provide for the effective protection of the country, and the welfare of the people." In his memorandum explanatory of these two articles, Lord Wellesley said, "recollecting the inconvenience and embarrassment which have arisen to all parties concerned under the double Government and conflicting authorities in Oude, Tanjore, and the Carnatic, I resolved to restore to the Company the most extensive and indisputable powers of interposition in the internal affairs of Mysore, as well as an unlimited right of assuming the direct management of the country." The government of Mysore was placed under the management of the renowned brahmin, Poornea, the minister of Hyder and Tippoo, and he was supported by the able and active superintendence of Sir Barry Close, Mr. Webbe, and

Digitized by Google

Colonel Wilks. Under these favourable auspices the country flourished and a surplus of two crores of rupees was accumulated in the treasury.

Raja assumes the government, 1811.

In 1811, the raja having attained his sixteenth year, proclaimed his own majority, and, under the influence of his minions and flatterers, dismissed the faithful Poornea and assumed the charge of the government himself. The Resident reported that he was utterly unfit for the management of the country by the instability and the infirmities of his character, his utter disregard of truth, and his entire subservience to the influence of favourites. The government steadily deteriorated during the twenty years in which he held the reins. The accumulations of Poornea were dissipated, and all the establishments of the state fell into arrears. The administration became venal and corrupt; the highest offices were put up to sale; valuable crown lands were alienated, and new and grievous taxes were imposed. There was no security for property, and nothing worthy the name of a court of justice. This system of misrule was continued in spite of the admonitions of the Madras Government. Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor, paid a visit to Mysore in 1825, and, in a personal interview with the raja, gave him a deliberate warning that if the reform of the administration was not commenced forthwith, the direct interference of the British Government would be unavoidable. This remonstrance produced a partial improvement, but the raja soon relapsed into his old habits of prodigality and extortion. The Resident at his court subsequently renewed these expostulations, but finding them altogether unavailing, ceased to press them. Unable any longer to support the oppressions of the raja's administration, the people broke into open revolt, and in 1830 one half the kingdom was in a state of insurrection. Adventurers from the southern Mahratta country, and not a few of the Mysore constabulary, joined the standard of the insurgents and the peace and security of the Company's territories and of the Deccan were placed in jeopardy. It became necessary to send

Digitized by Google

a large British force into the field to quell the rebellion. A proclamation was issued inviting the cultivators to come into the British camp and peacefully state their grievances, with the promise that they should be redressed. The natives reposed entire confidence in the British officers, but none in those of the raja, and the insurrection at length died out.

Management of Mysore assumed by Government, 1832.

Lord William Bentinck then informed the raja that though tranquillity was for the present restored, the British Government could not permit its name or its power to be identified with these acts of misrule, and was imperiously called on to supply an immediate and complete remedy. It became indispensable, therefore, with reference to the stipulations of the treaty, to interfere for the preservation of the state of Mysore, and to save the various interests at stake from further ruin. To accomplish this object he deemed it necessary to transfer the entire administration of the country to the hands of British officers, paying over to the raja the sum stipulated in the treaty, a lac of star pagodas, and a fifth of the net revenue. Under the able and honest management of those functionaries the revenues have been improved to such an extent as to give the raja, from both sources, an income of about fourteen lacs of rupees a-year. This decisive measure of Lord William Bentinck received the entire approbation of the Court of Directors. The raja entreated that the administration might still be carried on in his name, but the Court directed that it should be conducted in the name and by the sole authority of the Company. Soon after, Lord William Bentinck appointed a commission, composed of officers of high standing in the service, to investigate the causes of the outbreak which had been quelled by the British army, and he gathered from their report that the representations of oppression had been overstated. From this, among other considerations, he was led to express a doubt whether the entire assumption of the country was in strict accordance with the terms of the treaty, and he proposed to

Digitized by Google

the Court to take over in perpetuity a portion of the country sufficient for the payment of the subsidy, and to restore the remainder to the raja, subject however, to the condition that if he neglected the Government, and suffered any gross and general oppression to be practised, the Company should be at liberty to resume this portion also. But the Court of Directors refused to sanction the proposal, and decided that the assumption of the whole country was justified by the provisions of the treaty, and essential to the security of the people. The Ministry soon after confirmed and completed the arrangements by directing that the produce of Mysore should thenceforward be treated both in England and in India, as that of a British possession, and be relieved from the payment of differential duties.

Bhopal, 1833-35. In the principality of Bhopal the policy of non-intervention led to anarchy and bloodshed, which a word from the paramount authority would at any moment have prevented. About eighteen months after the alliance with this state was concluded in 1818, the amiable and accomplished nabob was accidentally killed by a pistol shot, and his widow, Secunder Begum, a woman of high spirit and great ability, assumed the responsibilities of the government, with a Christian for her prime minister, and a Mahomedan and a Hindoo as his assistants. She affianced her daughter to her nephew and adopted him as the heir to the throne; but she was unwilling to part with any portion of her power, and not only delayed the celebration of the nuptials, but refused him any share in the government after he had attained his majority. He appealed to Lord William Bentinck, who declined to interfere further than by insisting on the completion of the marriage. In the hope of strengthening her position she laid aside the restraints imposed on females by Asiatic custom, and held durbars without a screen, and appeared on horseback without a veil, to the great scandal of her people. The young nabob, finding himself still denied all authority, made his

Digitized by Google

escape from the capital and began to collect partisans. The two parties appealed to arms, and an action was fought in which the young nabob was defeated and the leaders on both sides were killed. Lord William Bentinck had by this time quitted India, and his successor, Sir Charles Metcalfe, considering that the principle of non-interference had been carried to an extreme, offered the mediation of the Government; tranquillity was immediately restored. The Begum retired to a jageer, and the youth ascended the throne. His reign however was brief, and the succession devolved on his daughter, then six years of age, who was invested with the supreme authority at the usual age, and has continued to govern the principality to the present time with extraordinary talent and success. She took great delight in manly sports, and speared and shot with all the ardour of the keenest sportsman. She was in the habit of working ten and often twelve hours a-day; she visited every district and attended minutely to the drill and discipline of her soldiers. She reformed her civil establishments, paid off the state debts, resettled her revenue, set up a new police, and organized a judicial system. Her energy is still the admiration of the country, and her administrative ability has seldom been surpassed in India. During the Mahratta and Pindaree war, her grandfather sold his jewels to maintain the contingent of troops with which he joined the British army. During the sepoy mutiny, the present Begum exhibited the ancient fidelity of her house to the British Crown, and she is the only Indian princess decorated with the Grand Cross of the "Illustrious Star of India."

Joudhpore, 1834. The same vacillating policy was exhibited in regard to the various principalities of Rajpootana, although the turbulent habits of the feudal nobles, and the vicious constitution of the government, rendered the interposition of the paramount power indispensable to their tranquillity. This will be illustrated by a reference to the transactions in Joudhpore and Jeypore. Maun Sing, the raja of Joudhpore, had been deposed by his "thakoors," or feudatory chiefs, before the Pindaree war, on account of his insanity, real or feigned; but

Digitized by Google

he recovered his power, if not his reason, in 1821, and immediately began to wreak his vengeance on them. A reconciliation was effected by the Resident in 1824, but it was of brief duration. The raja determined to retain the lands he had agreed to restore to them, and commenced a new course of spoliation. The chiefs again appealed to the British Government, but the non-interference policy was now predominant, and they were driven to seek redress by their own efforts. They raised an army of 7,000 men, and advanced to the capital with the determination to depose Maun Sing. He appealed in great alarm to Lord William Bentinck, who felt the necessity of interposition, and was disposed, for various reasons, to consider the case exceptional. The Resident was empowered to restore peace, which was effected with a stroke of the pen. But the insane violence of the raja's character broke forth afresh, and he had the temerity to insult the Governor-General by refusing, on a frivolous pretext, to attend the great durbar of all the Rajpoot chieftains, which was held at Ajmere in 1831. He allowed his tribute to fall into arrears; he gave encouragement to the robber tribes of the desert, and refused to apprehend the thugs, or to surrender the malefactors, who sought refuge in his country. A large army was, therefore, ordered to march into Marwar to bring the raja to reason, but the mere demonstration of force was found to be sufficient, and he hastened to send a deputation with his humble submission. The Rathores—the designation of this tribe—were accustomed to boast of the "hundred thousand swords" with which they had supported the throne of Akbar, and of the resistance they had offered for three years to Aurungzebe. But they quailed before the majesty of British power, and the raja's envoys meekly enquired what occasion there could be for an army when a single constable would have been sufficient to convey the commands of the Governor-General. Every demand was at once conceded.

Jeypore, 1835. During the minority of the raja of Jeypore, his mother acted as regent, and resigned herself to the counsels of

Digitized by Google

Jotaram, a banker of the Jain sect. The haughty nobles expelled the money changer from the post of minister, and installed one of their own number, Bhyree Saul, a connection of the royal family. The regent mother embraced every opportunity of thwarting his measures and throwing the government into confusion, in the hope of embroiling him with the British authorities, and at length obtained the permission of Sir David Ochterlony to recall Jotaram. The nobles resented the indignity of having their renowned state subjected to the control of bankers and women, and a civil war appeared inevitable, when Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had succeeded Sir David, proceeded in person to Jeypore, and convened a meeting of the chiefs. The majority of them were found to favour the views of the regent ranee, and her authority was accordingly guaranteed with liberty to choose her own minister. A grand durbar was held, and the young raja, seated on the lap of Sir Charles, received the homage of the Jeypore nobility. Jotaram became the head of the administration, but it speedily fell into confusion. The revenues were misappropriated, the troops remained unpaid and became insubordinate, and the tribute to the Company was allowed to run into arrears. The Jain pursued the nobles who had opposed him with great vindictiveness, and a general spirit of disaffection pervaded the country. An appeal was made to Lord William Bentinck, to terminate the disorders of the state by the supreme authority of the British Government, but he refused to interfere. Emboldened by this reply, Jotaram attempted to confiscate the estates of Bhyree Saul. The regent ranee died soon after, having held the reins of power for ten years. Her death was followed, in 1835, by that of the raja, but not without such strong suspicions of poison that the minds of men became inflamed against Jotaram, and he was obliged to tender his resignation. The British Government accepted the guardianship of the infant heir, and the political agent who was sent to the capital was just in time to prevent a conflict between the party of the exasperated nobles and of Jotaram. The banker was directed to remove to a

Digitized by Google

distance from the capital, and as he attributed his disgrace to the Resident, he, or his partisans, hired men to assassinate him. He was assailed and wounded as he was leaving the durbar, and barely escaped with his life, but his assistant, Mr. Blake, was barbarously murdered in the streets. This attempt to apply the principle of non-interference to Jeypore kept the country in commotion for a long period, and eventually resulted in the appointment of a British agent to reside at the court, and in the establishment of a stringent control over the affairs of the state.

Oude, 1831-34. The most strenuous efforts had been made by successive Governors-General, Lord Wellesley, Lord Minto, and Lord William Bentinck, to prevail on the king of Oude to reform the administration of his country, but with little appearance of success. The king who was seated on the throne during Lord William Bentinck's government, had been brought up in the zenana, and possessed no aptitude for business; his ideas were altogether effeminate and puerile, and his life was devoted to indulgence. He entertained the deepest aversion to his father's able minister, and would have taken his life but for the protection of the Resident, Mr.—afterwards Sir Herbert—Maddock. In an able and exhaustive report upon the state of the country, Mr. Maddock represented it as in a state of decay. There was no security either for life or property, and the administration presented a constant scene of violence and oppression; scarcely a day passed in which he did not hear from his own residence in Lucknow the booming of artillery employed in the siege of forts, or in the coercion of zemindars, who never paid their rents without compulsion. The character of the native Government of Oude had, however, become the subject of party feelings, and there were not wanting men who maintained that it was cultivated like a garden, and presented a flourishing appearance. But Lord William Bentinck in his despatch to the India House, assured the Court that the representations of Mr. Maddock were corroborated by the testimony of all the officers civil or military

Digitized by Google

who had traversed the province, and that during his own journey from Lucknow to Rohilcund the whole country exhibited a melancholy picture of desolation and misery. Some of his predecessors had questioned the right of the British Government to interfere with the administration of the country, but he considered it the bounden duty of the Company to interpose for the protection of the wretched inhabitants, and constrain the king to put a stop to the arbitrary and tyrannical proceedings of his officers. He accordingly proceeded to Lucknow in 1831 and transmitted a written communication to the king, in which he insisted on the adoption of reforms, and distinctly announced that if he continued to withhold them, the entire management of the country would be taken over by the British Government, as in the cases of Tanjore and the Carnatic, and an annuity assigned for the support of the royal family.

Hakim Mehdi, 1834.

Before this remonstrance was delivered, the king had reappointed Hakim Mehdi to the post of minister. This extraordinary man was the son of a Persian gentleman of Sheraz, who emigrated to India in search of political employment, and entered the service of Oude, in which he rapidly rose to distinction. He was one of the ministers who in 1801 vigorously but ineffectually opposed the cession of territory demanded by Lord Wellesley. He identified the prosperity of his adopted country with his own happiness, and devoted his splendid talents to the improvement of the administration, though thwarted at every step by his sovereign. During successive reigns he had amassed a princely fortune, which he expended with unbounded generosity in the town of Rampoora in the British territories, to which he had retired. It was gracefully remarked of him that the poorest man never entered his house without a welcome, or departed without relief. His liberality was not confined to his own neighbourhood. In the remote region of Cashmere, he contributed bountifully to rebuild a town, on hearing that it had been overthrown by an earthquake. There was no ostentation in his charity and no bigotry

Digitized by Google

in his creed. Lord William Bentinck pronounced him one of the ablest men in India, and as a revenue administrator unsurpassed by any officer, European or native. Having resumed charge of the government of Oude, he introduced important reforms with a vigorous hand; he reduced the amount of the assessments, organized a police, and established courts of justice. He retrenched the profligate expenditure of the zenana, curtailed the allowances of the parasites who thronged the court, and had the courage to reduce the lavish stipends of the king's uncles. But he was too radical a reformer for the meridian of Oude. The ear of the king was filled with complaints and calumnies, and he began to withdraw his confidence from his able and virtuous minister. Hakim Mehdi implored the support of the British Government, pleading the terms of the treaty of 1801, which bound the Nabob Vizier "to advise with and act in conformity to the counsel of the Company's officers," and he maintained that they were under a solemn obligation to afford it. But Lord William Bentinck, acting upon the principle of non-intervention, refused to make use of his authority, and the king soon after dismissed the minister, on the frivolous pretence that he had used disrespectful language towards his mother, and had insulted the portrait of his father. In a despatch which the Court of Directors sent to Calcutta in the early period of Lord William Bentinck's administration on the subject of Oude, they remarked that "had it not been for their connection with the country, although misrule might have attained as great a height, it would not have been of equal duration. It was the British Government which, by a systematic suppression of all attempts at resistance, had prolonged this disorganization, which became permanent when the shortsightedness and rapacity of a semi-barbarous government was armed with the military strength of a civilized one." In reply to Lord William Bentinck's minute representing the deplorable condition to which the country had been reduced, and the heavy responsibility which was thus entailed on the Company, they authorized him at

Digitized by Google

once to assume the government of Oude, if circumstances should appear to him to render it necessary. But, under the menace which Lord William Bentinck had formally administered to the king, and under the influence of some of Hakim Mehdi's reforms, the country began to present an improved appearance. The Governor-General, moreover, when he received the order of the Court to take over the administration of the country, was on the eve of quitting India, and he contented himself with communicating the substance of their instructions to the king, and with intimating to him that the execution of this order would be suspended in the hope that a spontaneous adoption of improvements would render it altogether unnecessary.

Sindia, 1833. No event of any moment occurred at the court of Sindia after the conclusion of the Mahratta war in 1818, in which he alone escaped the fate of the other princes, and retained his possessions and his power. He expired in peace and honour at Gwalior on the 21st March, 1827, at the age of forty-seven, having reigned thirty-four years. During this long and eventful period, he had witnessed a stupendous revolution of political power in India. At his accession, the Mahratta empire had reached the zenith of its glory, and he was the most powerful member of that great commonwealth, as well as the most influential and important chief in India,—second in military strength and resources only to the Company. At the time of his death, the Mahratta empire was extinct; the Peshwa, a captive, though treated with all the honours of royalty, and his kingdom, a British province. The Guickwar, the Nizam, Holkar, and the raja of Nagpore were divested of all political power, and controlled by subsidiary armies, and he himself was entirely subordinate to British authority. On his death-bed, he sent for Major Stewart, the Resident, and in reference to the future government of his kingdom, said "I wish you to do whatever you think proper." He left no son, and had invariably refused to adopt one. His widow, Baeza-bye, without whose advice he is said never to

Digitized by Google

have formed any determination, was the daughter of the famed Sirjee Rao Ghatkay, the most accomplished villain of his age. She was a woman of imperious disposition, masculine character, and inordinate ambition. She inherited all the violence of her father's temper, but was not like him either cruel or vindictive. She was constrained by the voice of the chiefs to adopt a son, and her choice fell on Junkojee, a near relative of her deceased husband, but, in the hope of prolonging her own authority, she neglected his education, and studiously withheld from him all those advantages which might prepare him for his important station. To every remonstrance on this violation of her duty she replied, "no one ever wished to qualify another for the exercise of that power which he himself wished to retain." Fretting under the restraints which she continued to impose upon him after he had attained his majority, he appealed to Lord William Bentinck, who relaxed the principle of non-interference to the extent of insisting on his being furnished with a separate seal, with which every public communication addressed to the British Government was to be authenticated. But he was still kept under the most galling control within the precincts of the palace, from which he at length succeeded in making his escape. He took refuge with the Resident, through whose mediation a reconciliation was effected, though not without great difficulty. Soon after this event, Lord William Bentinck visited Gwalior, when both parties pressed their claims on his attention, but he declined to afford any authoritative expression of his wishes, and advised the raja to be content with his present position, and await the course of events. The belligerents were, in fact, left by the Governor-General to their own exertions; the bye to retain her power as long as she was able, and the raja to wrest it from her whenever he could. The breach was thus widened, and the raja, having at length gained over some of the disciplined battalions, beleaguered the palace on the 10th July, 1833. The bye, alarmed for her personal safety, fled to her brother, Hindoo Rao, and

Digitized by Google

summoned the Resident to her assistance, but he declined to attend her. She then called up one of the brigades and was proceeding towards the Residency, when she was met by a body of the young raja's troops, and a deadly conflict would have ensued if the Resident had not hastened to the spot and interposed to prevent it. The interference of the supreme Government now became imperative, and the Resident received instructions to exercise his power and influence to compose these differences, and to prevent a civil war. He endeavoured to ascertain the state of public feeling, and finding the chiefs and other influential men of the durbar anxious to support the cause of the raja, threw the weight of his authority into that scale, and Junkojee received a letter from the Governor-General congratulating him on his accession to the throne. The bye was permitted to retire with the wealth she had accumulated to Agra, only sixty-five miles from Gwalior, but as she continued to disturb the peace of the country by her incessant intrigues, she was required to remove to Furruckabad, where she encamped with an army of followers. At the instance of the Governor-General, the Government of Gwalior agreed to allot her a large annuity, on condition of her retiring to her jageer in the Deccan, and the rapid desertion of her retainers constrained her, however reluctantly, to accede to these terms.

First symptoms of Russophobia, 1830.

While the Government of India thus adopted the principle of non-interference in reference to the states of India which were dependent on it for support and guidance, attempts were made to establish a connection with the independent states beyond the Company's territories. The cycle of alarm had come round again. In 1808, Napoleon had obtained a paramount influence at the court of Persia, and was supposed to entertain designs on India, which the Government in London sought to counteract by forming alliances with Persia, Cabul, and Lahore. Russia had now secured the same ascendency in Persia which the French had formerly enjoyed, and was believed to cast a hostile glance at the Company's dominions in India. The Government therefore

Digitized by Google

deemed it advisable to open up the navigation of the Indus, and obtain a commanding influence on that river, by forming defensive alliances with the independent princes on its banks, the Ameers of Sinde, the Khan of Bhawulpore, and Runjeet Sing.

Progress of Runjeet Sing, 1809—1822.

To elucidate the intercourse now established with Runjeet Sing, it is necessary to resume the narrative of his progress since the mission of Mr. Metcalfe in 1809. His government was founded on the principle of conquest, which became the vital element of its growth. Ambition is inherent in all Asiatic powers, but with Runjeet Sing the increase of territory was the one object of his life, and the improvement of his army, and the acquisition of the sinews of war, absorbed his attention to the neglect of every other branch of government. To restrain his army from turning upon himself and creating internal disturbances, it was kept in constant employ. Scarcely a year passed without some military expedition, and his troops were assembled for action at the close of the rains with the regularity of the season.

Reform of his Army.

The wealth and energies of the Punjab were concentrated on military objects. This system was exactly suited to the martial character of the Sikh population, whom it furnished with congenial occupation, and likewise gratified with the submission of province after province to the supremacy of the Khalsa, as well as with the means of acquiring wealth. Glory and plunder thus became the chief sources of their fidelity to the crown. Runjeet Sing had been struck with the discipline and efficiency of the small escort of sepoys which accompanied Mr. Metcalfe in 1809, when they successfully repelled an assault of the Sikh fanatics, of whom he himself stood in awe, and he immediately commenced the formation of regular battalions on the model of the Company's army, by means of deserters whom he allured from its ranks. His soldiers at first manifested great reluctance to abandon their old national mode of fighting on horseback with matchlocks,

Digitized by Google

for which they had long been renowned through India; but Runjeet Sing succeeded in overcoming it by the encouragement of higher pay, by incessant attention to their drill and equipment, and by going through the military exercises in person. Through these unremitting exertions the Sikhs were at length converted into regular infantry soldiers, and admirable artillery-men, and contracted the Indian feeling of adoration of their guns.

Conquests of Runjeet Sing, 1810—22.

Runjeet Sing, having completed the subjugation of all the Sikh chieftains who were once his equals, and brought the whole of the Punjab under one dominion, led his army in 1810 against Mooltan, which was still bound by allegiance to the throne of Cabul, but he was obliged to content himself with the exaction of two lacs of rupees. Three years later he entered into a convention with Futteh Khan, the vizier of Cabul, for a joint expedition to Cashmere, but the vizier outstripped his army, and having obtained possession of the principality, refused to share it with his ally. While the Afghan troops were thus employed in Cashmere, Runjeet Sing surreptitiously obtained possession of the district and fort of Attock on the Indus, esteemed the eastern key of Afghanistan. A battle ensued, in which Futteh Khan was completely overpowered, and the authority of Runjeet Sing was permanently extended up to that river. Soon after, Shah Soojah, the exiled monarch of Cabul, who had been for some time a captive in Cashmere, was persuaded to seek refuge with Runjeet Sing. He brought with him the far-famed diamond, the Koh-i-noor, or mountain of light, which, according to the Hindoo legends, originally belonged to the Pandoos, the mythological heroes of the Muhabharut. In the last century it was the chief ornament of the celebrated peacock throne of Delhi, which was carried away with other trophies by Nadir Shah, in 1739. On the murder of that prince and the plunder of his tents, Ahmed Shah Abdalee obtained possession of it, and it descended with his throne to his grandson, Shah Soojah. He was now within the power of Runjeet Sing, who was equally avaricious of jewels and of horses, and who subjected the Shah and his

Digitized by Google

family for several days to the torture of hunger, till he surrendered the gem. Runjeet Sing was anxious to avail himself of the name of the Shah for his own designs, and not only detained him in close custody but treated him with the greatest indignity. He succeeded at length in eluding the vigilance of his guards, and made his escape in disguise to Loodiana, where the British Government generously allowed him a pension of 50,000 rupees a-year. In 1818, Runjeet Sing led his army a second time against Mooltan, and, after a futile siege of four months, obtained possession of the citadel by a happy accident, through the temerity of one of his fanatic soldiers. It was in this year that Futteh Khan, the vizier of Mahomed Shah, the ruler of Cabul, whose energy and talent alone had kept the Afghan monarchy from dissolution, was first blinded and then barbarously murdered by the execrable Kamran, the heir apparent of the throne. Mahomed Azim, the governor of Cashmere, and one of the twenty brothers of Futteh Khan, hastened to Cabul with a large army to avenge his death. The king was obliged to fly to Herat, the only province which now remained to him of all the vast possessions of the Abdalee dynasty, and the Barukzyes, Futteh Khan's tribe, became supreme in Afghanistan. Runjeet Sing took advantage of the confusion of the times to obtain possession of Peshawur, the capital of the Afghan province lying between the Khyber pass and the Indus, but it was speedily recovered by the Afghans. The loss, however, was more than compensated by the conquest of Cashmere in the following year, with which he was so elated, as to celebrate it by illuminating Lahore and Umritsir for three successive nights. During the next two years his army was employed in wresting from the throne of Cabul the Derajat, or strip of territory, about 300 miles in length, lying between the right bank of the Indus and the Soliman range, and stretching down southwards to the borders of Sinde.

Arrival of the French Officers, 1822.

In March, 1822, two of the French officers of Napoleon's army, Colonel Allard and Colonel Ventura, who had left Europe on the restoration of

Digitized by Google

the Bourbons, and had subsequently obtained employment under the king of Persia, made their way through Candahar and Cabul to Lahore, and after some hesitation, were received into the service of Runjeet Sing. The Sikh soldiery were distinguished by their indomitable courage, their alert obedience, and their endurance of fatigue. They were animated by a strong feeling of national enthusiasm, strengthened by a high religious fervour, every regiment having its own *grunthee*, or expounder of the sacred book, a copy of which was usually deposited near the regimental colours. Runjeet Sing had already succeeded in bringing his army up to a high standard of efficiency by his personal exertions, and by constant employment in expeditions in which they were accustomed to victory. From these French officers, and from Generals Court and Avitabile who followed them, that army now received the further improvement of European discipline and tactics, though not without exciting murmurs of discontent among the old Sikh officers, who resisted all innovations under the plea that they had conquered Cashmere, Peshawur and Mooltan without any of these new fangled manœuvres. Under the instruction of these officers the Sikh army became more effective and powerful than even the battalions which De Boigne had created for Sindia, and Raymond for the Nizam. Thus, the important design, which was sedulously pursued by Lord Wellesley, of breaking up the armies of native princes disciplined by European officers, and of providing in treaties against the renewal of the system, was completely frustrated. In a kingdom which could scarcely be said to have an existence during his administration, an army trained and commanded by European skill, more formidable than any of those which had created anxiety in his mind, arose on our northern frontier, within two hundred miles of Delhi.

Battle of Noushera, 4th March, 1823.

In March, 1823, Runjeet Sing advanced against Peshawur with an army of 24,000 men, and was met at Noushera by a body of Eusufzye highlanders not exceeding 5,000, who had raised the cry of a religious war against the

Digitized by Google

infidel Sikhs. The Sikh fanatics—the Akalees, or immortals—were thus brought into conflict with the Mahomedan fanatics, and the Sikhs were completely defeated with the loss of their leader. Fresh troops were brought up, and two charges of cavalry were made, but repulsed by the Mahomedans, who were not dislodged from their position before night-fall, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of Runjeet Sing. This battle became memorable from the fact that a body of mountaineers and villagers, without any support from regular troops, but frantic with religious fanaticism, succeeded in baffling the exertions of more than four times their own number of the well-trained and disciplined Sikh troops. Runjeet Sing was ultimately left master of the field, and sacked Peshawur and plundered the country up to the mouth of the Khyber. His troops, however, had a superstitious aversion to any expedition beyond the Indus, and he did not consider it prudent, at the time, to occupy a province which would entail harassing duties on his soldiers, without contributing anything to his treasury. It was accordingly left in the hands of Yar Mahomed, the brother of Dost Mahomed, on the simple condition of his paying tribute to Lahore. In 1827, the tranquillity of the province was disturbed by Syud Ahmed, a Mahomedan fanatic, who was a petty officer of horse ten years before, in the service of Ameer Khan, the Patan freebooter, and on receiving his discharge when the army was broken up, turned reformer and pretended to have special revelations from heaven. By denouncing the irregularities which had crept into the Mahomedan ritual, and professing to restore the creed to its original simplicity and purity, he kindled into a flame that feeling of fanaticism which is always inherent in a Mussulman population. During a visit to Calcutta in 1822, he made many disciples, and then proceeded on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the centre of Mahomedan unity, and the perennial fountain of Mahomedan enthusiasm. He returned from the tomb of the prophet withfeelings still more excited, and proceeding to Afghanistan proclaimed a religious war against the Sikhs. In 1827, he raised the green standard

Digitized by Google

of Islam in the Eusufzye mountains, and came down on Peshawur, but was defeated with ease by the disciplined battalions of Runjeet Sing. Two years after he repeated the invasion, when Yar Mahomed, who held the province under Runjeet Sing, was overcome and slain, but the opportune arrival of General Ventura dispersed the fanatics and saved Peshawur. In 1830, Syud Ahmed attacked Sultan Mahomed, to whom Peshawur had been granted as a fief by Runjeet Sing, and drove him out of the province, which was occupied by his followers. Elated with his success he proclaimed himself Caliph, and struck coin in the name of "Ahmed the Just, the Defender of the Faith," and not only demanded a tithe of all their property from the Eusufzyes, but began to interfere in their matrimonial arrangements. The rude inhabitants of the mountains resisted this assumption of authority, and expelled him from the country, when he retreated to Cashmere, where he was overtaken by the troops of Runjeet Sing and killed in May, 1831,—six months before his followers rose in insurrection, at a distance of fifteen hundred miles, in the neighbourhood of Calcutta.

Lord Amherst and Runjeet Sing—Cart horses, 1827—1831.

In 1827, Lord Amherst took up his residence at Simla which has now become a great and popular sanitarium. It lies within a hundred and fifty miles of Lahore, and Runjeet Sing embraced this opportunity of sending a complimentary mission, together with a magnificent tent of shawls for the King of England, which was duly presented to His Majesty by the Governor-General on his return to England. Runjeet Sing had a strong passion for horses, and thought little of despatching a military expedition to secure any of extraordinary beauty of which he might happen to receive information. Lord Ellenborough, who was then President of the Board of Control, resolved to present him in return with a team of stalwart English dray horses, and to make the conveyance of them the ostensible motive of exploring the Indus. That river was then not more known than in the days of Alexander the Great, and all our

Digitized by Google

knowledge of it was derived from the authors of antiquity. Instead, therefore, of despatching the horses by the more obvious route of the Ganges, it was determined to send them up the Indus, and to make an attempt at the same time to establish friendly relations with the chiefs on its banks. On the arrival of the horses at Bombay, Sir John Malcolm selected Lieutenant—afterwards Sir Alexander—Burnes to take charge of the mission, a duty for which he was peculiarly fitted by his knowledge of the native languages and character, his intelligence, and his ambition. Sir John also furbished up one of his old state carriages, to be presented, along with the horses to the ruler of the Punjab. At the mouth of the Indus Lieutenant Burnes entered the territory of Sinde which had become tributary to Cabul, on the decay of the Mogul empire, but was subjugated in 1786 by the Talpooras, a tribe from Belochistan, beyond the Indus. The conquering chiefs, who were designated the Ameers of Sinde, partitioned the country among themselves, and an independent prince presided over each of its three divisions. Like all new dynasties in India they had been incessantly engaged in encroaching on the territories of their neighbours, the Afghans and the Rajpoots, and had at length succeeded in extending their sovereignty over a hundred thousand square miles. From their first establishment in the government of the country they had manifested an inveterate jealousy of the English, and rigidly prohibited all intercourse with them, as the most effectual means of securing their own independence. They had broken up the Company's factory which they found established at the ancient emporium of Tatta, and treated with invariable insolence every envoy sent to them from Bombay. The arrival of Lieutenant Burnes with the avowed design of traversing the length of the country was considered an event of evil omen, and one Belochee chief, as the mission advanced up the river, exclaimed "The mischief is done; the English have seen our country." The Ameer of Hyderabad, the capital of lower Sinde, exhibited great

Sinde, 1830.

Digitized by Google

hostility to Lieutenant Burnes, who was subjected to gross indignity, and twice constrained to retire from the country. The energetic remonstrance of Colonel Pottinger, the Resident in the neighbouring British province of Cutch, at length procured him a suitable reception at that court, and the means of transporting his convoy up the Indus.

Lieut. Burnes at Lahore, 1831.

On quitting Sinde he entered the territories of the khan of Bhawulpore, who welcomed him with much cordiality, and exhibited with a feeling of pride the testimonials which Mr. Elphinstone had given his grandfather, on his way to Cabul in 1809. The principality of Bhawulpore was limited in extent and far from fertile. Runjeet Sing had despoiled the prince of all his territory north of the Sutlege and would long since have absorbed the remainder, but for the restrictions of the Metcalfe treaty of 1809. On entering the Punjab, Lieutenant Burnes was met by the officers deputed to wait on him and escorted through the country with great pomp, and received at the court with ostentatious courtesy. Runjeet Sing gave him a warm embrace as he entered the durbar, and on the production of the letter with which he said he had been entrusted by the minister of the King, his master, touched the seal with his forehead, while the whole court rose to honour it. In this communication Lord Ellenborough stated that the King of England, knowing that his highness was in possession of the most beautiful horses of the most celebrated breeds in Asia, had thought that it might be agreeable to him also to possess horses of the most remarkable breed of Europe, and that his Majesty witnessed with sincere satisfaction the good understanding which had for so many years subsisted, and which God ever preserve, between the British Government and his highness. While the letter was read a salute of twenty-one guns was fired from each of sixty pieces of cannon drawn up for the occasion. During his residence at Lahore, Lieutenant Burnes was treated not only with distinguished honour in public, but with great personal kindness both by the genial

Digitized by Google

chief himself, and by all his officers, European and native. He then proceeded to Simla, where Lord William Bentinck was residing, and submitted the information he had collected respecting the commerce, the politics, and the military strength and organization of the provinces he had traversed. The Governor-General was highly gratified with the talent, zeal, and enterprize which he had exhibited in his arduous task, and directed him to return to Bombay through Afghanistan, Balkh, and Bokhara, and to explore the routes and resources of these unknown regions.

Power of Runjeet Sing, 1831.

The greatness of Runjeet Sing had been steadily on the increase for twenty years, and the power he had now attained exceeded that of any of the native princes who had successively succumbed to the strength of our arms. The small body of cavalry, armed only with matchlocks, which was bequeathed to him by his father, had been gradually improved and expanded into a grand army, which, including the contingents of his jageerdars, consisted of no less than 82,000 men, animated by the successes of a dozen campaigns, and in part, disciplined and commanded by European officers. His artillery consisted of 376 guns, and an equal number of swivels. His annual revenue was estimated at two crores and a half of rupees, and he had accumulated ten crores in the vaults of the fortress of Govindgur, which he had erected in the neighbourhood of Umritsir, to curb the Akalees, the armed and fanatic guardians of that national shrine. Though unable to read or write, the habit of listening to papers in Persian, Punjabee, and Hindee, had given him great facility in comprehending whatever was brought before him by the able secretaries whom he had selected with great judgment, and who were obliged to be in attendance, by night as well as by day. He was the most extraordinary man of the age between Constantinople and Pekin, and with the command of such an army and such resources as he had created, and with the animation of a lofty spirit of ambition, would doubtless have founded another empire in Hindostan, but for the treaty dictated by

Digitized by Google

Mr. Metcalfe in 1809, which confined him to the right bank of the Sutlege. It was this restriction which constrained him to direct his views of aggrandizement to other quarters. He had accordingly conquered Cashmere and the territories to the north of it up to the confines of Tartary; he had rendered Peshawur tributary, and extended his power up to the Khyber pass. Across the Indus he had taken possession of the Derajat, which brought him to the borders of Sinde, on which he cast a longing eye. But though he had reached the summit of power, and was absolute throughout the Punjab, he never arrogated the invidious distinction of an independent sovereign, but both in speech and writing represented himself as the head of the Sikh Khalsa, or commonwealth, which was regarded with a feeling of superstitious devotion by the chiefs, the people, and the soldiery of the Punjab. His noble army was the army of the Khalsa; and the shout of triumph was "Victory to the Khalsa," not to Runjeet Sing. All the grand achievements of his reign were performed for the sake of Gooroo Govind, the founder of the community, in the name of God, and for the glorification of the Khalsa. There was no apprehension of any revolt against his authority during his lifetime, but it was doubtful whether the same allegiance would be paid by the Sikh barons and their followers to his son, who was utterly deficient in talent and energy, a mere purple-born prince. In these circumstances, he considered it important to secure for his throne and his dynasty all the strength and prestige which a close alliance with the British Government, and his own recognition by the Governor-General as the chief of the Khalsa, were calculated to impart. On the other hand, Lord William Bentinck deemed it politic to manifest to the princes of India, who regarded the progress of Runjeet Sing's power with exultation and hope, that a feeling of cordiality existed between the two Governments; and it was arranged that a meeting should be held at Roopur, on the banks of the Sutlege.

The Khalsa, 1831.

Digitized by Google

Assembly at Roopur. 1831.

This assembly was the most brilliant in which the representative of the Company had participated since the first establishment of their power in India. Lord William was distinguished by the simplicity of his habits, and his sincere aversion to the pageantry of power; but he considered it important on this occasion to give éclat to the meeting in the eyes of all India by a grand military display, which should likewise enable Runjeet Sing's generals to appreciate the efficiency of the various arms of our force, and gratify his own curiosity regarding their organization and equipment. He accordingly ordered up two squadrons of European lancers with their mounted band, two battalions of native infantry, two squadrons of irregular horse, and eight horse artillery guns. He descended from Simla to the encampment at Roopur on the 22nd October, and Runjeet Sing, accompanied by his brilliant court, arrived at the opposite bank of the Sutlege three days later with 10,000 of his best horse and 6,000 selected infantry. But as the time for the meeting approached, his habitual mistrust led him to entertain suspicions of treachery, and he sent for General Allard late overnight, and informed him that he could not venture to proceed across the Sutlege on the morrow. The general endeavoured to remove his apprehensions, and offered to stake his own head that there would be nothing disagreeable. The Maharaja was not satisfied with this assurance, and directed the astrologers to consult the Grunth, or sacred volume. They reported that the result of the meeting would be auspicious; but they advised him to take two apples, and present one to the Governor-General and the other to his secretary: if they were received without any hesitation it might be considered a favourable omen. Runjeet crossed the Sutlege on a bridge of boats, and in the middle of the street formed by British troops was met by Lord William Bentinck, to whom he presented the apple, which was cheerfully accepted, and all his fears were at once dissipated. He occupied the centre of the cavalcade; his nobles mounted on elephants, and decked in gorgeous

Digitized by Google

apparel, preceded and followed him, while a body of 4,000 horsemen, uniformly dressed in yellow, whom the Maharaja had cautiously brought over with him, formed the wings of the procession. He directed every movement himself with the eye and confidence of a soldier, and even in this holiday ceremonial exhibited the activity of his mind, and his wonderful talent for command. Presents of every variety, and of the most costly description, had been collected by the order of Lord William Bentinck from various parts of India, sufficient in value to efface the remembrance of Lord Ellenborough's cart horses, and Sir John Malcolm's old state carriage. Runjeet examined every article minutely with the curiosity of a child, and saw it carefully packed up under his own eye, by his master of the jewel office. The following day the Governor-General returned the visit. The spectacle was one of extraordinary splendour. Seventy elephants, richly caparisoned, advanced with the principal Sikh chieftains to meet him. The royal tents exhibited a scene of magnificence which had not been witnessed in India since the days of Aurungzebe, and which was little to have been expected among the rough soldiers of the Punjab. After passing through two triumphal arches Lord William Bentinck was conducted to a splendid pavilion, where the courtiers, resplendent with silk and jewels, were individually introduced to him. The court was shaded by a lofty arcade of yellow silk, and the floor was covered with the richest shawls and carpets which Cashmere could produce. The spacious tent behind, in which the Governor-General was received, composed of crimson velvet, yellow French satin, a sheet of inlaid pearls, and jewels of immense value, realized the highest visions of oriental grandeur. The frank manners, the free enquiries, and the lively conversation of Runjeet Sing gave an air of ease and cheerfulness to ceremonials which were usually stately and stiff. He called up and paraded before the Governor-General his favourite horses, announcing their names and their virtues with great animation. One of the dray horses was likewise brought

Digitized by Google

forward, but his huge and shaggy legs and coarse appearance formed a strong contrast with the glittering gold and crimson velvet with which his back was ornamented. A week was passed in reviews, entertainments, and displays, recalling to mind the days of Mogul magnificence, and the parties separated with an increased appreciation of each other's power. Before the encampment was broken up Runjeet Sing prevailed on Lord William Bentinck to affix his signature to a pledge of perpetual friendship, which, "like the sun, was to shine glorious in history."

Treaty with Sinde, 1831.

Runjeet Sing had long been eager to add Sinde to his dominions, and more especially to obtain possession of Shikarpore, a commercial mart on the right bank of the Indus, of such magnitude and importance that the bills of its bankers pass current from Astracan to Calcutta. But he began to suspect that the British Government entertained designs regarding that province in opposition to his wishes, and that the transmission of the horses up the Indus, when they might have been sent with greater ease up the Ganges, was not without some political object. In a private interview with the secretaries before the Governor-General's departure, he endeavoured to sound them on the subject, and hinted at a joint expedition against the Ameers, and a partition of their dominions. Sinde, he remarked, was a rich country; the wealth accumulated in it for a century was immense; and the treasury at the capital, as Lieutenant Burnes told him, contained twenty crores of rupees; on the other hand, there was no standing army, or indeed any troops at all beside the Beloche militia. But no intimation could be extracted from their official lips of the intentions of the Governor-General, although on the very day of his arrival at Roopur he had instructed Colonel Pottinger to proceed on a mission to Sinde, for the double object of concluding a commercial treaty with the Ameers, and of watching the movements of a Persian envoy who was at the capital negotiating a matrimonial alliance with the Talpoora family, as the extension of Persian influence to the banks of the

Digitized by Google

Indus was already beginning to be identified with the progress of Russian power in the east. Colonel Pottinger reached Hyderabad in February, 1832, and found that the Ameers recoiled from the idea of a connection of any description with the Company's Government. The opening of the Indus to British trade and enterprise appeared to them fraught with indefinite danger to their independence, and they apprehended that it would not be long before the factory, as in other cases, was transformed into a cantonment. They yielded at length to the pressure of the envoy, and a treaty of commerce was concluded, the most memorable article of which was that "the contracting parties bound themselves never to look with the eye of covetousness on the possessions of each other." Within eleven years Sinde was a British province. A request was at the same time made to Runjeet Sing to co-operate in opening the Sutlege to trade, which he was assured would afford him the gratification of seeing a steamboat. To this proposal he consented with great reluctance, remarking that these commercial projects of the British Government on the Indus had snatched Shikarpore from his grasp, and defeated all his views on the kingdom of Sinde.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK'S ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS—MATERIAL PROGRESS.

Administrative Reforms, 1828—34.

THE government of Lord William Bentinck stands forth in high relief in the history of British India as the era of progression. It derives its lustre from his enlightened views of domestic policy, his vigorous administrative reforms, his intrepid philanthropy, and his spirited efforts to promote the material interests of the empire. Lord Cornwallis had given form and consistence to our institutions in 1793, but there had been little attention to their improvement

Digitized by Google

since the days of Lord Wellesley, and they were daily becoming more and more effete. Great changes had taken place in the European service, and in the native community, and the whole system of judicial administration required to be recast and adapted to the progress of circumstances. For this task Lord William Bentinck was particularly adapted by the clearness of his perceptions, his freedom from traditional prejudices, and his inflexible resolution; and he was happily aided by the counsels and co-operation of three of the ablest men whose services the Company had ever enjoyed, Mr. Butterworth Bayley, Sir Charles Metcalfe, and Mr. Holt Mackenzie. He found the course of civil justice blocked up by the lumbering waggon of the provincial courts, which he justly characterized as "resting places for those members of the service who were deemed unfit for higher responsibilities." The judicial character of the judges was, with some exceptions, the object of general contempt, and their decisions in appeal, only served to bewilder the judges of the courts subordinate to them, and to disgust the community. In regard to criminal justice their agency was simply a national grievance. They proceeded on circuit to hold the sessions twice in the year, and prisoners were kept in confinement for months before they were brought to trial. The prosecutors and witnesses were detained all this time at their own expense, and subjected to such intolerable inconvenience, while awaiting the arrival of the judges, that the concealment of crime became an object of universal solicitude throughout the country. Lord William Bentinck earned the gratitude of the public by sweeping away a class of tribunals, which combined the three great evils of delay, expense, and uncertainty. The duties of the session were, at first, entrusted to the officers he appointed Commissioners of Revenue, but finding the functions of tax-gatherer incompatible with those of a criminal judge, he transferred the duty to the judge of the district, with instructions to hold a monthly jail delivery. He entirely remodelled the system of civil judicature. A separate sudder or chief court was likewise established in

Digitized by Google

the north-west provinces, and the natives of Delhi were no longer constrained to travel a thousand miles to Calcutta to prosecute an appeal. A similar boon was likewise conferred on those provinces by the erection of a separate Board of Revenue at Allahabad, and the control of the fiscal interests of twenty-five millions of people was established in the most central position. The value of these and all the other judicial reforms of Lord William Bentinck was indefinitely enhanced by restoring to the people the inestimable boon of the use of their own vernacular language in all the courts, civil, criminal, and fiscal, to which they were amenable. The Mahomedans had imposed their own court language, the Persian, on the conquered people of India in every transaction with the state. The Company's functionaries, who had from the first manifested a strong predilection for everything that was Mussulman, retained this language in the courts, although the anomaly and the incongruity was thereby increased, inasmuch as justice was now dispensed in a language foreign not only to the parties and the witnesses, but also to the judge himself. Lord William Bentinck substituted the vernacular for the Persian in all tribunals, though not without a strenuous opposition from the conservatism of the civilians.

Revenue settlement, N. W. Provinces, 1833.

The merit of the settlement in the north-west provinces belongs to Lord William Bentinck's administration. On the acquisition of those provinces, consisting of the districts in Oude ceded by the Nabob Vizier, and the districts in the Dooab conquered from Sindia, Lord Wellesley pledged himself to grant them a permanent settlement of the land revenue, but it was repudiated by the Court of Directors, who ordered it to be limited to five years. This was a death blow to all agricultural improvement. Any attempt by the landlord to improve his estates only exposed him to the risk of an increased assessment, and as the period of revision approached he felt it to be his interest to fill up wells, and to neglect cultivation. An effort was at length made by Mr. Holt Mackenzie, the secretary to the Government

Digitized by Google

in the territorial department, a man of broad and liberal views and great earnestness, to grapple with this large question, and he produced the celebrated Regulation VII, of 1822, a monument of skill and industry, of which any statesman might justly be proud. It was based on mature knowledge and sound and equitable principles, but it was unfortunately too complicated in its details to work well, and it imposed unlimited duties on a limited agency. The collectors disrelished the laborious task imposed on them, and performed it in a perfunctory manner. Some of them affirmed that a period of twenty years, and others that a whole century would be necessary to complete the settlement in the mode required. The Board of Revenue when asked what progress had been made in it, replied that they knew nothing about the matter. At the end of ten years it was found that the work chalked out by the Regulation was scarcely begun. Lord William Bentinck was resolved to remove the opprobrium of this neglect from our administration, and after a residence of two years in Calcutta, made a tour of the north-west provinces, and during his progress invited the revenue officers of the various districts to his tents to discuss the question of the settlement. After obtaining all the information within his reach, he examined the subject in all its bearings during his residence at Simla, and on his return to Calcutta held a meeting at Allahabad of the Revenue Board and the most eminent officers in the department, when the question was fully discussed and finally settled, and the Regulation which resulted from these consultations was passed in Council, after his arrival in Calcutta, in March, 1833.

Plan of settlement—Robert Bird, 1833.

The new settlement possessed the great merit of simplicity. It dispensed with many of the elaborate enquiries of the former Regulation, which, however useful, were not deemed essential to a fair adjustment of the claims of the state. The area of each village was to be surveyed by European officers and recorded in a map, while each individual field was measured by native officers and entered in the village register. Without a minute

Digitized by Google

classification of soils, the proportion of cultivated, culturable, and waste lands, together with every circumstance which could affect the cultivation, was duly recorded. The Collector was required to decide all questions of disputed boundaries on the spot, with the aid of native assessors, and the most prolific source of litigation and misery in India was thus dammed up. All judicial questions which might arise in the course of his proceedings were determined with the aid of the punchayet, the ancient and time-honoured jury of five, in which the natives reposed such unbounded confidence as to believe that "where the *punj* is, there is God." The assessment was fixed by the Collector, after an impartial investigation, and a free and friendly communication with the people, and the settlement was then made for a period of thirty years, either with the ryots individually, or with the landholder, or with the village community, as the case might be. The Collector was assisted by a body of uncovenanted deputies with liberal allowances, and their office was thrown open to the natives of the country, without reference to caste or creed. The general control of these operations was committed to Mr. Robert Bird, the ablest financial officer in the service since the days of Sir John Shore. He possessed a large grasp of mind, and combined an intimate knowledge of the system of land tenures in the north-west, with indomitable energy, and that sternness of purpose which is indispensable in any great and difficult undertaking. He was allowed to select his own subordinates, and the zeal and ability they displayed did no little credit to his discernment, while the honour of having served under him was considered a distinction for life. Under such auspices, and with such instruments, the settlement was brought to a termination within ten years. It embraced an area of 72,000 square miles, and a population of 23,000,000. It was the greatest fiscal achievement of the Company's Government. The first settlement had ruined those for whose benefit it was devised, the last saved millions of much enduring men from misery and ruin. The labours of the renowned Toder Mull, under the

Digitized by Google

illustrious Akbar, in the department of revenue settlements which historians have never ceased to applaud, were rivalled, if not eclipsed by those of Robert Bird; but there was no public recognition of the services of one who had conferred such inestimable blessings on a country as large and populous as Great Britain. He was only a Company's servant, and the scene of his duties lay in India, and he was allowed to pass into obscurity on his return to his native land, and sink into the grave without the slightest mark of distinction.

Employment of Natives, 1831.

But the measure which above all others has endeared the memory of Lord William Bentinck to the natives of India, is that which he inaugurated of introducing them to honourable employment in the public service. Allusion has been made in a former chapter to the cardinal error of Lord Cornwallis's policy, that of excluding them from every office except the lowest and the worst paid. This exclusion was fortified by the peculiar constitution of the Company, which remunerated the Court of Directors for their labours in the government of India by patronage, and not by money, and thus created a strong tendency to secure the monopoly of offices to their nominees. It would be difficult to discover in history another instance of this ostracism of a whole people. The grandsons of the Gauls who resisted Cæsar became Roman senators. The grandsons of the Rajpoots who opposed Baber in his attempt to establish the Mogul power, and at the battle of Biana all but nipped his enterprise in the bud, were employed by his grandson Akbar in the government of provinces and the command of armies, and they fought valiantly for him on the shores of the bay of Bengal and on the banks of the Oxus. They rewarded his confidence by unshaken loyalty to his throne, even when it was endangered by the conspiracies of his own Mahomedan satraps. But wherever our sovereignty was established in India, the path of honourable ambition and every prospect of fame, wealth, and power was at once closed on the natives of the country. This proscription was rendered the more galling by comparison with the practice of the native

Digitized by Google

courts around, where the highest prizes of power were open to universal competition. The contrast was, moreover, aggravated by the fact that the native princes themselves, the Nizam and Tippoo, Sindia and Holkar, and Runjeet Sing, adopted a more liberal policy, and freely entrusted offices of the highest responsibility, both military and political, to European foreigners. No benefit which we might confer on the country could be deemed an adequate compensation for the loss of all share in the government, one of the highest and most honourable aspirations of humanity. It was vain to expect any attachment to our rule when even the best affected of our native subjects could see no remedy for this degradation but in the subversion of our government. The enlargement of the native mind by education only served to augment the evil, by sharpening expectations which could not be gratified. The argument for this policy was based on a notion of the administrative superiority of Englishmen, and a persuasion of the utter unfitness of the natives for any of the functions of government, mingled with a dread that their venality would be injurious to the administration. It seemed to be forgotten that it was idle to hope for any improvement in the character of the natives while they were excluded from all places of trust and influence, and left without any object of pursuit but the gratification of their own passions. Some feeble attempts had been made in preceding administrations to modify the system, but they were not based on any broad and generous principle, and were intended simply to relieve the labours of the Company's favourite officers of the civil service. Lord William Bentinck brought with him to India a deep conviction of the viciousness of this policy, and a determination "to throw open the doors of distinction to the natives, and grant them a full participation in all the honours and emoluments of the state." As far back as 1824, the Court of Directors had expressed their conviction that to secure promptitude in the administration of justice, native functionaries must be employed to dispose of all suits, of whatever description and amount.

Digitized by Google

The leading members of Government were fully prepared to abandon the Cornwallis doctrine, and to give the natives an interest in the stability of our government by giving them a share in the management of it. But it required an intrepid reformer like Lord William Bentinck at the head of the government, to carry out these large views. This liberal policy was inaugurated by the Regulations of 1831, which completely reconstructed the legal establishments of the Bengal Presidency, and entrusted the primary jurisdiction of all suits, of whatever character or amount, not excluding those instituted against Government, to native agency. The new system provided for three grades of native judges, the highest that of Principal Sudder Ameen, on 500 rupees a-month, subsequently raised to 750, which is still egregiously inadequate to the position and responsibilities of the office. The principle of employing natives in important offices was gradually extended to other departments, and it has resulted in imparting a degree of vigour and popularity to the British administration which it never enjoyed before. So greatly indeed has this privilege been appreciated by the natives, that there is some risk of their losing the manly feeling of independence in their great eagerness for public employ. The policy introduced by Lord William Bentinck has been zealously and nobly followed up by his successors. New paths of distinction have been opened to native ambition, and a native judge now sits on the bench of the highest court in Calcutta, and natives of rank and influence occupy seats in the Legislative Council.

Suttees, 1830.

The most benignant and memorable act of Lord William Bentinck's administration was the abolition of Suttees. Some have questioned whether this atrocious rite could be traced to a religious origin, but it was always consecrated by the solemnities of religion, and it has been practised for twenty centuries, in a greater or less degree, wherever Hindooism has been professed. Even in Bali, one of the remote islands of the Eastern Archipelago, where the Hindoo faith still lingers, no fewer than seventy widows were burnt alive

Digitized by Google

towards the close of the last century, with the body of one of the rajas. It was discouraged and sometimes prohibited by the Mahomedans, and Akbar himself on one occasion, issued from his palace on horseback and rescued a victim from the pile. The first effort to interfere with it under the Company's Government was made by Mr. George Udny, the friend and associate of Sir John Shore, and by Dr. Carey. Lord Wellesley to whom they presented an address, was then on the eve of quitting the Government, but he recorded a minute in favour of abolishing the rite, stating "that it was one of the fundamental maxims of the British Government to consult the opinions, customs, and prejudices of the natives, but only when they were consistent with the principles of humanity, morality and reason." The Sudder Court, however, put back the cause of abolition in 1810, by issuing a Circular Order setting forth the circumstances in which the act was to be considered illegal, on which Mr. Courtenay Smith, one of the greatest men who ever adorned the bench of that court, asserted that "these orders had only served to spread and confirm this execrable usage." On this and every subsequent attempt to lessen the evil by regulating it, the Court of Directors justly remarked that such measures tended rather to increase than to diminish the practice, and that, by prohibiting it in certain cases, the Government appeared to sanction it in all others, and was thus made an ostensible party to the sacrifice. The Bombay Government committed a still more fatal error in employing one of its European officers to construct the pile in order to give the unhappy victim an opportunity of escape, if she was unable to sustain the torture of the flames. Subsequent to 1820 the question was discussed with increasing earnestness in England and in India, but some of the most distinguished of the public officers, Mr. Colebrooke, Mr. Mountstewart Elphinstone, and Colonel Sutherland, shrunk from the bold proposal of a direct prohibition, and some went so far as to assert that it would violate the rule of toleration to which our Government owed its stability. In 1823, the Court of Directors sent a

Digitized by Google

despatch to India, in which all the arguments which had been adduced against the abolition were earnestly and sincerely combated, and the question was referred to the consideration of the local Government, with an implied expression of the gratification it would afford them to learn that the rite could be safely abolished. Lord Amherst consulted the most eminent of the Government servants, but the diversity of the opinions they expressed only served to increase his embarrassment. Mr. Courtenay Smith and Mr. Alexander Ross boldly urged the immediate and peremptory prohibition of the rite. Mr. Harington, who had been for a quarter of a century a great authority on all local questions, and who was withal a man of strong religious feelings, considered that the rite could be extinguished only by a gradual improvement among the people through the dissemination of moral instruction. Lord Amherst was obliged to inform the Court that he could not, in such circumstances, recommend the absolute interdiction of it under legal penalties, but he trusted to the diffusion of knowledge then in progress for the eventual suppression of "this detestable superstition." In July, 1827, the Court placed the question in the hands of the Governor-General, requesting him, after serious deliberation, to determine in what degree the ordinary course of civilization could be accelerated by a judicious and seasonable interposition of authority.

Lord William Bentinck's enquiries, 1829.

Such was the position of this question when Lord William Bentinck landed in Calcutta, feeling, as he said, the dreadful responsibility hanging over his head, in this world and the next, if, as the Governor-General of India, he was to consent to the continuation of this practice one moment longer, not than our security, but than the real happiness and permanent welfare of the native population rendered indispensable. He resolved to take up the question without any delay, and "come to as early a determination as a mature consideration would allow," and "having made that determination, to stand by it, yea or no, and set his conscience at rest." Immediately after his arrival, he

Digitized by Google

circulated a confidential communication among fifty or sixty of the chief military and civil officers of Government, requiring their opinion as to the effect which the abolition of "this impious and inhuman sacrifice not of one but of thousands of victims," was likely to produce in the native community generally, and on the minds of the sepoys in particular. The majority of the officers in the army asserted that the immediate and peremptory abolition of the practice would create no alarm among the native troops. Of the civil functionaries, three fourths advocated its positive prohibition. The most strenuous advocate for non-interference was the eminent orientalist, Dr. Horace Wilson, whose literary pursuits had imparted a strong oriental bias to his sympathies, and who was the great patron, and the idol, of pundits and brahmins. He affirmed that the practice could not be abolished without doing violence to the conscientious belief of every order of Hindoos; that it would be a direct interference with their religion, and an infringement of the pledge we had given them to support it; that it would diffuse a detestation of British authority, create extensive dissatisfaction and distrust, and alienate the affections of the people. The warmest advocate of abolition was Mr.—afterwards Sir William—Macnaghten, second, as an orientalist, only to Dr. Wilson. He admitted that, according to the notions of the Hindoos, the sacrifice of suttee was a religious act of the highest merit, and that it was unjust as well as unwise to interfere with religious creeds, however absurd. "Let the Hindoo," he said, "believe in his three hundred and thirty millions of gods until it may please the Almighty to reclaim him from his idolatry; but let him not immolate thousands of helpless females on the altar of fanaticism, in defiance of the eternal laws of nature and the immutable principles of justice." He ridiculed the phantom of danger: "Under the Mahomedans, the Hindoos tamely endured all sorts of insults to their religion and violation of their prejudices. Their temples were polluted and destroyed, and many were constrained to become Mussulmans, yet there

Digitized by Google

was no general organized disaffection. The rite was not respected by the hardy and warlike Hindoos of the north-west, but by the sleek and timid inhabitants of Bengal, the fat and greasy citizens of Calcutta, whose very existence depended on the prosperity of the British Government."

Abolition of Suttee, 1830.

Fortified by the opinion of the most experienced and the most liberal minded men in the service, and confident of the support of the Court of Directors, Lord William Bentinck and his two counsellors, Mr. Butterworth Bayley and Sir Charles Metcalfe, on the 14th of December, 1829, passed that celebrated Regulation which "declared the practice of Suttee illegal and punishable by the criminal courts as culpable homicide." Thus by one bold and resolute effort, a practice which had polluted India from the remotest antiquity, was extinguished under the flag of England, and for the first time since the introduction of Hindooism, "the Ganges flowed unblooded to the sea." Twenty-five attempts at suttee were made after the passing of the Regulation, but they were prevented by the simple interposition of the police. Not the slightest feeling of alarm, still less of resentment, was exhibited in the army, or in the country. In the course of a few years, the practice became a matter of history like the sacrifice of children at Saugor, and the enlightened Hindoo of the present day looks back on this barbarous custom with the same feelings with which Englishmen look back on the human sacrifices of the Druids. Lord William Bentinck was enabled within a twelvemonth to assure the Directors that there never was a greater bugbear than the fear of revolt. The only circle in which the abolition created any sensation was that of the rich and orthodox baboos of Calcutta, who resented the decision of Government, and more especially the promptitude with which it had been carried into execution, as it deprived them of the gratification of obstructing it. They drew up a petition to the Government in which the fine Roman hand of their European counsellor was distinctly visible, demanding the restoration of the rite as part and parcel

Digitized by Google

of Hindooism, with which Parliament had pledged itself not to interfere. The native organ of the party in his weekly journal affirmed that the signataries to the petition for restoring the "sacred rite of Suttee" included "the learned, the wealthy, the virtuous, the noble, the polite, and the mild." But Lord William Bentinck turned a deaf ear to every remonstrance, and refused to suspend the Regulation for a moment. A memorial was then drawn up to the Privy Council in England, appealing against the proceedings of the Government of India, because they contravened the Act of Parliament which ordained that "nothing done in consequence of the rule of the caste should be held to be a crime though not justifiable by the laws of England." The appeal was taken into consideration in June 1832, and the venerable Lord Wellesley, the first Governor-General who had recorded his condemnation of the rite, had the high gratification of assisting in dismissing the petition, and in giving to this sublime act of humanity the sanction of the highest tribunal in the British empire.

Hindoo Law of Inheritance, 1832.

To Lord William Bentinck is also due the merit of having established the rights of conscience in India. To prevent defections from Hindooism, the Hindoo legislators had enacted that ancestral property should descend only to those who performed the funeral obsequies of a deceased parent or relative, according to the rule of the shasters, and the man who renounced the Hindoo creed, was thus consigned to poverty. The Mahomedans, who were enjoined to propagate their religion by the sword, treated this injunction with profound contempt. No Hindoo was ever permitted to occupy a seat on the bench during their supremacy, and the Mahomedan judges, who rejected Hindoo law, were not likely to deprive a proselyte to their own creed of his patrimony. Mr. Hastings, in a spirit of liberality, guaranteed to the Hindoos and Mussulmans the enjoyment of their own laws of inheritance in his first code of 1772. This equitable rule was subsequently re-enacted both in England and in India, by those who were as ignorant as Mr. Hastings was of the intolerant

Digitized by Google

character of the Hindoo law of property to which they were giving a British sanction. Lord William Bentinck resolved to relieve the Government from the odium of countenancing this illiberal law and, to avoid a fanatical opposition, took advantage of the occasion of remodelling and re-enacting several existing regulations, quietly to introduce a clause which provided that "the Hindoo and Mahomedan law of inheritance should apply only to those who were *bonâ fide* professors of those religions at the time of its application." The law was passed without observation, and the tendency of it to restore liberty of conscience was not discovered by the bigoted Hindoos till it came into operation, when it was found to be too late to demand its repeal. In the same spirit of liberality he abrogated another rule, equally unjust, but of our own creation. The Mahomedans had encouraged proselytism by the bestowal of honours and estates and titles, and some of the most eminent of their provincial governors—among others the great Moorshed-kooly-khan, the founder of Moorshedabad—were converts from Hindooism. The Company and their servants in India, from that dread of offending native prejudices, which, though in some cases judicious and prudent, too often led to the toleration of evil, had run into the opposite extreme, and expressly debarred native converts to Christianity from holding any post, however humble, under their government. Lord William Bentinck was determined to extinguish this disreputable anomaly, and in the same Regulation which threw open the public service to the natives of the country, ordained that there should be no exclusion from office on account of caste, creed, or nation. The publication of this enactment demonstrated the egregious error into which the Government had fallen by supposing that the unnatural stigma they had cast on their own creed, would tend to conciliate and gratify the Hindoos. Those who had been most clamorous for the restoration of suttee were the first to come forward and applaud this act of liberality and justice.

Admission of native Christians to office, 1831.

Digitized by Google

Suppression of Thuggee, 1830.

It was during the administration of Lord William Bentinck that the first energetic measures were adopted to extirpate the Thugs, a fraternity of hereditary assassins, who subsisted on the plunder of the victims they strangled. Few districts were without resident Thugs, but they generally adopted the occupation of agriculturists to conceal their nefarious profession, and no district was free from their depredations. They were in the habit of quitting their homes in a body, leaving their wives and their children in the village. They generally attached themselves, as if by accident, to the travellers they met, from whom they obtained such information as they required, by a free and cheerful intercourse. On reaching some spot suited to their purpose, a strip of cloth, or an unfolded turban, was suddenly thrown around the neck of the victim, the ends of which were crossed and drawn tight till he ceased to breathe. His body was then rifled and thrown into a pit hastily dug with a pickaxe which had been consecrated by religious ceremonies. The Thugs were bound to secrecy by solemn oaths, and recognized each other by peculiar signs and a slang vocabulary. They considered themselves as acting under the immediate auspices of the deity, and had a special veneration for Doorga, the tutelary goddess of vagabonds, thieves, and murderers. They observed her festivals with superstitious punctuality, and presented offerings at her most celebrated shrines in various parts of the country. They had a firm confidence in signs and omens, and endeavoured through them to ascertain her pleasure regarding their expeditions, and considered themselves as acting under a divine commission when they were favourable. The gangs were recruited with juvenile apprentices, who were gradually and cautiously initiated into the mysteries of the profession by one of the elders, who was ever after regarded in the light of a spiritual guide. The number of their victims in the year was counted by thousands. The subordinate native chiefs and officers in Central India, as well as the zemindars and policemen in our own provinces, to whom they were well

Digitized by Google

known, connived at their practices on the condition of sharing their plunder. The establishment of British functionaries in the native states first brought this atrocious system to light, and some feeble and ineffectual efforts were made to eradicate it. Lord William Bentinck was resolved to spare no exertion to deliver India from this scourge. With this view, he created a special department for the suppression of Thuggee, and placed it under the direction of Major—afterwards Sir William—Sleeman, whose name is inseparably associated in the annals of British India with this mission of humanity. He threw his whole soul into the work, and organized a comprehensive system of operations, which embraced every province; by means of approvers who turned king's evidence, he obtained a complete clue to the proceedings and movements of the whole fraternity, as well as the means of identifying its members, and was thus enabled, with the efficient staff of officers whom he had the discernment to select, to take the field simultaneously against the various gangs in every direction. It was not among the least important results of the establishment of one paramount authority throughout the continent of India, that the officers in this department were enabled to hunt the Thugs without impediment from province to province, whether under British or native rule, and to leave them no prospect of shelter in any district. In the course of six years, two thousand of these miscreants were arrested and tried, and three fourths of them sentenced to imprisonment, transportation, or death. The confederacy was effectually broken up, and travelling in India ceased to be dangerous. These efforts were crowned by the establishment of a school of industry at Jubbulpore, for the Thugs who had turned approvers, and for the children of convicted offenders. The men were ignorant of any trade save robbery and murder, but in the factory they were instructed in every branch of manufacture, and became skilled artisans, capable of earning an honest livelihood by their labour. The children, instead of being trained to crime, were taught the rudiments of learning

Digitized by Google

and trade, and fitted to become useful members of society. The scene of cheerful and industrious activity which the institution exhibited, viewed in contrast with the former occupation of its inmates, was calculated to afford the most grateful reflections to the mind of the philanthropist.

Steam communication, 1830-34.

The attention of Lord William Bentinck immediately after his arrival was devoted to the establishment of steam communication on the Ganges, and between India and England. Under his directions two vessels were built in Calcutta and fitted up with engines imported from England, and they performed in the brief period of three weeks the distance of eight hundred miles between Calcutta and Allahabad, which had ordinarily occupied three months. The success of this experiment induced him to press the completion of a steam fleet on the Court of Directors, and they responded to his wishes with a laudable alacrity. The system of steam navigation on the rivers in Hindostan was thus fully established under the auspices of Government, and eventually transferred to private enterprise. A still more important object with the Governor-General was the abridgment of the voyage between England and India, which he endeavoured to promote with untiring ardour. A considerable fund had been raised for this object in Calcutta as early as 1823, and a premium was offered for any steamer which should perform the voyage between the two countries within seventy days. The "Enterprise," commanded by Captain Johnson, was the first to compete for the premium, but she was a hundred and thirteen days in reaching Calcutta from Falmouth. The route by the Cape was consequently considered unsuited to the object. An attempt was then made by the King's Government, under the direction of Colonel Chesney, to open a communication by way of the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf, but the obstacles were found to be insuperable. It remained therefore to make an experiment by the Red Sea, and Lord William Bentinck directed the "Hugh Lindsay," a small steamer of four hundred tons, built for Government at

Digitized by Google

Bombay, to be despatched from that port on the 20th March, 1830, to Suez which she reached in a month. Three other voyages were subsequently performed by that vessel, and it was clearly demonstrated that, with suitable arrangements in the Mediterranean, the voyage from Bombay to England might be accomplished with ease in fifty-five days. But the Court of Directors raised an objection to these experiments on the score of the great expense they entailed. Lord William Bentinck replied that the revenues of India could not, in his estimation, be appropriated to any object more conducive to the good of both countries than that of bringing them into close communication with each other. The Chairman of the Court, however, questioned whether the end in view would be worth the probable expenditure, and the India House at length positively prohibited any further employment of the "Hugh Lindsay" for the conveyance of mails. The subject was soon after brought before the House of Commons, and the committee appointed to investigate it reported that a regular and expeditious communication by steam between England and India was an object of national importance, and that measures ought to be immediately adopted to establish it by way of the Red Sea, at the joint expense of the Company and the Crown. The indifference of the India House was overruled by the higher authority of Parliament, and the "Hugh Lindsay" was again put in requisition and despatched with the mails to Suez, but the Court of Directors were lukewarm on the subject, and the enterprise, conducted without spirit, fell again into abeyance. A subscription was likewise raised at the three Presidencies to the extent of three lacs of rupees for the promotion of this object, but the plans which were devised proved abortive.

The Peninsular and Oriental Company, 1842.

It was reserved for the Peninsular and Oriental Company to carry to a successful issue the comprehensive views to which Lord William Bentinck had devoted his attention, both in India and after his return to England. This Company, which was originally established for service to the ports in the Peninsula, was encouraged by a

Digitized by Google

Royal charter to extend its labours to India. Commencing with a small capital and a limited object, it has gradually grown up, by a rare combination of enterprise, prudence, and perseverance, into a great national undertaking. During the quarter of a century which has elapsed since its first vessel was despatched to Calcutta in 1843, the sphere of its operations has been expanded till it embraces the whole of the eastern hemisphere. Its fleet, second only to the navies of England, France, and America, now comprises more than sixty steamers, aggregating 100,000 tons, with 20,000 horse-power. By these powerful vessels passengers, letters, books, and merchandise are conveyed, week after week, over 11,000 miles of sea to the extreme points of Sydney in Australia, and Yokohama in Japan; and the voyages are performed with a degree of speed and punctuality which would have appeared fabulous half a century ago. Mails starting from different and distant extremities have traversed half the globe and reached their destination in England, simultaneously, within an hour and a half of their appointed time. The importance of this enterprise of a private company to the interests of the mother country, and her eastern dependencies, it would be difficult to overrate. It has given a character of solidity and compactness to the British empire in the Eastern world, which enables us to contemplate its expansion without any feeling of apprehension. It has linked the most distant countries of the east with the European world, and for the first time after the lapse of more than twenty centuries, given full effect to the views of Alexander the Great when he founded Alexandria, and destined it to be the highway between Europe and Asia. It has covered the Red Sea with steamers, and converted it into an English lake. It has given a political importance to the land of the Pharoahs, which constrains England to consider the maintenance of its independence, even at the hazard of war, an indispensable article of national policy. The empire of India belongs to the nearest European power, and it is the enterprise of this Company which has conferred the advantage of this position on

Digitized by Google

England. Our base of operations in Asia is the sea, but while transports were four or five months going round the Cape, our interests were always exposed to adverse contingencies. It is the spirited exertions of this Company which have brought the ports of India within four weeks' reach of the resources of England, and completed our ascendency in the east.

Education; Orientalism, 1813—33.

The cause of education received a fresh impulse as well as a beneficial direction during Lord William Bentinck's administration. The earliest movement of Government towards the intellectual improvement of India dates from the year 1813, when on the motion of Mr. Robert Percy Smith, who had been Advocate-General in Calcutta, and, as usual, obtained a seat in Parliament on his return, a rider was added to the India Bill, directing that a lac of rupees should be appropriated "to the revival and promotion of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories out of any surplus which might remain of the rents, revenues, and profits of our territorial acquisitions." This vote was interpreted both in Leadenhall Street and in Calcutta to apply chiefly to the revival and encouragement of Hindoo and Mahomedan literature; and, considering the brahminised feelings of the period of Mr. Smith's residence in Calcutta, there can be little doubt that the grant was intended primarily, though not exclusively, for that object. During Lord Minto's administration, the only public money expended in education was devoted to the establishment of Hindoo colleges, with the view, as the Government stated, of giving the people the benefit of the beautiful morality embodied in the shasters. Mr. Dowdeswell, the superintendent of police in the lower provinces, had stated in his report, that he could not expect to obtain credit for his narrative of a thousandth part of the atrocities of the *dacoits*, but the only remedy he could propose was that the institutions of Mahomedanism and Hindooism should be revived, and gradually moulded into a system of

Digitized by Google

instruction for these banditti. The fund voted by Parliament was allowed to accumulate for ten years, when Mr. Adam distinguished his brief tenure of office in 1823 by appointing a Committee of public instruction to suggest measures for the better education of the people in useful knowledge, and the arts and sciences of Europe, and for the improvement of public morals. This enlightened movement was soon after strengthened by the receipt of an unexpected despatch from Leadenhall Street. Seven years before this period, Lord Hastings had suggested to Mr. Charles Grant the propriety of appropriating the Parliamentary grant to the support of schools rather than of Hindoo colleges. Mr. Grant replied that there had always been in the Direction men of influence opposed to the intellectual improvement of the natives; they were gradually dying out, but it would still be premature to urge the course which the Governor-General proposed. But Mr. James Mill, the historian, the advocate of all liberal principles, now occupied an important position in the India office, where he had acquired that influence which is naturally exercised by a great mind. A proposal had been received from the Government of India to improve the Hindoo college at Benares, and the Mahomedan college in Calcutta, and to add to them a Hindoo college in the metropolis. It fell to Mr. Mill to draft the reply to this despatch, and he stated that "in professing to establish seminaries for the purpose of teaching mere Hindoo or mere Mahomedan literature, the Government bound itself to teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous, and a small remainder ndeed in which utility was in any way concerned. The great end of Government should be, not to teach Hindoo or Mahomedan learning, but useful learning." But Orientalism was still supreme in Calcutta. High attainments in Sanscrit and Arabic formed the surest road to promotion and honour in the public service, and the leading members of Government were naturally partial to the cultivation of those studies which had raised them to distinction. The education department, more-

Digitized by Google

over, was under the absolute control of Dr. Horace Wilson, the great champion of native literature and institutions. The Parliamentary grant was accordingly—with some trifling exceptions to save appearances—devoted for ten years longer to the promotion of studies, of which the mode, the medium, and the scope were altogether oriental in their character, and designed to conciliate old prejudices, and to perpetuate old ideas.

New policy of education; introduction of English, 1833.

Meanwhile, a predilection for English was rapidly spreading among the natives in and around the metropolis, and a demand for instruction in that language, and the acquisition of European science, was pressed with increased earnestness on the attention of the Board of Education. The Board itself was divided into two hostile parties; the Orientalists, headed by Dr. Wilson, who deprecated any interference with the patronage of Hindoo literature, and the Anglicists, as they were termed, the advocates of a European education through the medium of English, who were animated by the energy and the counsels of Mr.—now Sir Charles—Trevelyan, to whom the country is under lasting obligations for his untiring zeal at this critical period in the cause of sound and liberal education. The division in the Board brought its operations to a dead lock, and an appeal was made to Government. Mr. Macaulay, the greatest English classic of the age, was now a member of the Supreme Council, as well as President of the Board of Education, and he denounced with irresistible force the continued promotion of Orientalism, as tending, not to support the progress of truth but to delay the death of expiring error. "We are at present," he said, "a Board for printing books which are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was when it was blank, and for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, and absurd theology." The question was brought to an issue on the 7th March, 1835, by the resolution of the Governor-General in Council, that "the great object of the British Government

Digitized by Google

ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that the funds appropriated to education would be best employed on English education alone." No college or school of oriental learning was, however, to be abolished, while the natives were inclined to avail themselves of it; the stipends to the teachers and students were to be continued, but not renewed; and the publication of oriental works and of translations of medical and mathematical works into Arabic, which neither the teachers nor pupils could comprehend, was at once discontinued.

Remarks on this measure, 1834.

This resolution encountered a stern opposition, and the Asiatic Societies in Calcutta and in London, as well as on the Continent, came forward to deprecate it as a severe discouragement of the cultivation of oriental literature. The design of these associations was to prosecute researches into the history, antiquities, and literature of the east, and to unfold the ancient records of Asia to the European world. It was the unquestionable duty of a liberal Government to patronize such labours, and to make suitable provision from the public funds for the preservation of the ancient monuments of Indian civilization, whether in stone or manuscript; but it was a dereliction of duty to divert to the promotion of this object the scanty funds allotted to the education and improvement of the people. Nor was the patronage of the state necessary to the maintenance of Hindoo learning. It had continued to flourish for centuries without any succour from the Mahomedan princes, and there were ample funds in the country for its support, apart from those of the Treasury. To prevent the settlement of the interlopers whom the Directors could not entirely exclude from the country, they had adopted and rigidly enforced the principle, altogether novel in the history of conquest, of prohibiting their own countrymen from acquiring an interest of any description in the soil. With the exception of the estates held by Mahomedans, which were comparatively few, the whole rental of the Gangetic valley was in the hands of Hindoos, and available for the

Digitized by Google

encouragement of their institutions. The celebrity of all religious, social, and family festivals, in popular estimation, depended on the entertainment of brahmins, and the gifts bestowed on them were proportioned to their literary reputation. Hence it was impossible to discover how the withdrawal of Government aid from the two or three colleges it had established could affect in any perceptible degree the cultivation of the sacred language of the Vedas. The encouragement of English was, on the other hand, one of the highest blessings which could be conferred on the country. It unlocked to the natives all the stores of European knowledge and science, and brought them into association with the highest civilization in the world. It shook the fabric of error and the empire of superstition which had survived the lapse of twenty-five centuries. It introduced a flood of light into the minds of the natives upon every object of human enquiry, and communicated to them the secret of our own greatness. The judicious resolution of Lord William Bentinck has been followed by a degree of success which exceeds the most sanguine expectations, and the language and literature of England have now become as familiar to the upper ten thousand, as ever the language of Rome was within the sphere of her conquests. The only drawback connected with it has been the neglect of vernacular education, through which alone the great body of the people can receive the elements of mental improvement. But public measures in every department in India depend so greatly on the idiosyncracies of those who happen, for the time, to be in power, that there is no reason to despair of seeing this error remedied at some future time, and the million rescued from the barbarism of ignorance.

General Assembly's institution, 1833.

The cause of sound and enlightened education was materially promoted during this period by the efforts of the General Assembly, under the superintendence of the Rev. Dr. Duff. He proceeded to India in 1830, with the view of establishing an institution which should combine secular instruction of the highest order, through

Digitized by Google

the medium of English, with an unreserved communication of the doctrines and morals of Christianity, which were altogether excluded from the Government colleges. The tuition imparted in the institution he founded embraced every branch of a liberal education, and was in no respect inferior to that which the colleges supported by the state professed to bestow. He and his colleagues made no secret of the fact that their system of education was inseparably associated with Christian instruction, but their rooms were soon crowded with twelve hundred scholars, and the teachers were regarded with feelings of distinguished confidence. The eminent success of this institution is to be traced to the sturdy energy, and the classical endowments of its conductors, who are entitled to public gratitude for their exertions to elevate the native character, and to give the country the benefit of a complete education, in every department of human pursuit.

The Medical College, 1835. No attempt worthy of the Government had been made before the time of Lord William Bentinck to supersede native quackery by the cultivation of medical science. In the Sanscrit and Arabic colleges the systems of Galen and Hippocrates were taught in combination with a smattering of European ideas; and a public institution existed, though of a very inferior description, for training native doctors, as they were called, but they never rose above the dignity of apothecaries. As the crowning act of his administration, the Governor-General founded a medical college in Calcutta in the month of March, 1835, to afford, through the medium of English treatises and English lectures, a professional education to the natives in every branch of the science, as cultivated in Europe. The most eminent medical officers in the service were placed in the professors' chairs; a library and a museum were established, and every appliance necessary to place it on the same footing of efficiency as European colleges was furnished with a bountiful hand. Sage men of long experience and reputed wisdom confidently predicted the failure of the experiment. Contact with a dead body had for twenty centuries

Digitized by Google

been considered a mortal pollution by the Hindoos, and it was traditionally affirmed that native prejudices were invincible. But these anticipations, when brought to the test of actual practice, proved, as usual, to be the phantoms of a morbid imagination. Natives of high caste were found to resort freely to the dissecting room, and to handle the scalpel with as much indifference as European students. In the first year they assisted in dissecting sixty subjects, and the feeling of ardour with which they entered on these studies, and the aptitude for acquiring knowledge which they exhibited created a universal feeling of surprise. The downfall of one prejudice paved the way for the removal of others. In 1844, Dwarkenath Tagore, one of the most liberal and enlightened native gentlemen of the time, offered to take two of the students with him to England, and complete their professional education at his own expense. His views were cordially seconded by Dr. Mouat, the secretary of the college, to whose ability and energy the infant institution was indebted in no small measure for its efficiency, and he persuaded two of the most advanced pupils to accept the offer and cross the "black water," though at the risk of forfeiting the privileges of their caste. They entered the medical schools in London, and successfully competed with the best scientific students in England.

Sir John Malcolm Governor of Bombay, 1827.

The eminent services of Sir John Malcolm during a career of forty years in India, were tardily rewarded in the year 1827 with the Government of Bombay. His political opinions carry little weight in comparison with those of Munro, Elphinstone, Metcalfe, and others, but no officer of the Company ever possessed in a higher degree the happy art of conciliating the attachment of the people. He did not, like too many of his countrymen, keep himself aloof from the natives, but associated with them with all that freedom and ease, and that genial humour for which the French in India have always been more distinguished than the English. In the provinces of Central India he was

Digitized by Google

remembered with the same feelings of affectionate veneration which Bussy had excited in the Deccan, of whom it was remarked, that fifty years after he had left Hyderabad, the highest honour which the common people could pay to a European was to address him as Mons. Bussy. In the peaceful condition of Western India at the period of Sir John's appointment there was little scope for the exercise of his political or diplomatic talents, and his administration might have passed almost without observation, but for the collision which took place between the Supreme Court and his Government.

Collision of the Supreme Court and Gov., 1832.

For a quarter of a century Bombay had been content with the court of a Recorder for the administration of English law, and the bench had been adorned with the genius of Sir James Mackintosh. In 1823, the growing importance of the town and port rendered it advisable to establish a Supreme Court of Judicature, with three judges, as at Calcutta and Madras. The recollection of the unseemly and perilous struggle between the Court in Calcutta and the Government, in the days of Hastings and Impey, might have suggested the necessity of preventing a similar conflict by a clear definition of the powers and jurisdiction of the new court. But the same error was repeated, and with the same mischievous results. The new judges gave the utmost latitude of construction to the indefinite powers conferred on them by their charter, and manifested the same disposition to treat the Government of the Company with contempt, and to encroach on its authority, which had been exhibited in Calcutta fifty years before. In their "thirst for jurisdiction," as the great historian of India remarked of the Supreme Court of Bengal, "they availed themselves of the hooks and handles which the ensnaring system of law administered by them afforded in abundance, to draw within their pale the whole transactions of the country." It was in reference to these remarks of Mr. Mill, that the Bombay Chief Justice went out of his way to assert that "if the whole of what

Digitized by Google

Mr. Mill had said about judges and law had been inserted in the 'Bombay Courier,' he knew where the editor of that papei would be now, or in a day or two." The conflict between the two powers was brought to an issue in 1829. A Mahratta youth of fourteen, Moro Roghoonath, was left at the decease of his parents under the guardianship of his uncle, Pandoorang, a man of the highest family connections, and a kinsman of the late Peshwa. A near relative of the girl to whom Moro had been affianced, was anxious to obtain the wardship of the wealthy minor, and was advised by the lawyers to prefer his suit to the Supreme Court. He accordingly proceeded to Bombay, and under their directions made affidavit that the youth was compulsorily detained by Pandoorang at the risk of his life, and a writ of habeas corpus was immediately granted to bring him up to the Presidency. Under the instructions of Government, the Magistrate resisted the execution of the writ, alleging that neither the uncle nor the nephew had ever resided, or been possessed of property, within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and were not therefore amenable to its process. The judges maintained on the contrary, that their Court had been invested with all the powers of the Court of King's Bench, and was bound to watch over the liberty of the King's subjects to the farthest limits of the Presidency. Sir John Malcolm addressed a temperate and conciliatory letter to them, pointing out the injurious consequences of a contest between the Royal Court and the Company's Government, and proposing the suspension of all proceedings pending a reference to England. This communication was treated as an unconstitutional and a criminal proceeding, and denounced as an insult to the majesty of British law. During these discussions two of the judges died, but Sir John Grant, who was left alone on the bench, continued to multiply the issue of writs. A criminal, who had been sentenced to imprisonment for two years by the Sessions Judge of one of the districts in the interior, was released by order of the Supreme Court. The Guickwar

Digitized by Google

refused the payment of a loan due to the Company, under the impression that the Supreme Court had power to release him from the obligation. The authority of Government was shaken to its foundation, and it became necessary to vindicate it in the eyes of the natives. Sir John Malcolm deemed it his duty to resist the encroachments of the Court with the same vigour which Warren Hastings had exhibited under similar circumstances in Calcutta. He placed a guard at the door of Pandoorang's residence to prevent the entrance of the constable, and he issued a circular to all the Company's Judges and Magistrates directing them to make no return to any of the writs of the Court. Sir John Grant, finding the Government immoveable, closed the doors of the Court, and they remained shut for two months. The question was referred to the Privy Council in England, and his proceedings were pronounced to be utterly repugnant to law. Lord Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control, in his private letter to Sir John Malcolm, also expressed his strong disapprobation of the measures of the Court, and informed him that he had appointed two other judges, one of whom was the Advocate-General at Bombay, and that no further mischief was to be apprehended, as "Sir John Grant would be like a wild elephant led away between two tame ones." Elated with this communication, Sir John Malcolm read it aloud at his own breakfast table, amidst the acclamation of thirty or forty guests. A copy of it found its way—it was said mysteriously—into the Calcutta newspapers, and created a profound sensation throughout the country. The Governor was chagrined at the position in which he was placed by this disclosure of a private communication, but instead of ascribing his mortification to his own indiscretion, attributed it to the liberty which Lord William Bentinck had given to the press, which was to him an object of abhorrence. Sir John Grant immediately retired from the Bombay bench.

Conflict of the Court of

The current of Indian affairs in England at this period, presented some singular exhibitions, both

Digitized by Google

Directors and the Board, 1832.

at the Board of Control and in Parliament. It has been already noticed that the debt due by the Nizam to the banking house of Palmer & Co. was liquidated in 1823, and that they became insolvent within a twelvemonth, when their affairs were placed in the hands of trustees. During the discussions on this subject at the India House, the Court of Directors had solicited the opinion of three of the most eminent counsel in England whether British subjects in India were not debarred by Act of Parliament from enforcing claims for interest beyond twelve per cent., and they affirmed that such claims could not be sustained. Soon after, Lord Hastings brought the question forward in the House of Lords and it was referred to the decision of the twelve judges, who decided that the limitation of the rate of interest by Parliament did not apply to loans made to the subjects of independent princes by British subjects residing in their dominions. The opinion of counsel was sent out, forthwith, to India from the India House with alacrity, and the Resident at Hyderabad was directed to give it all due publicity. This notification ought, in all fairness, to have been withdrawn as soon as the judges had pronounced that opinion illegal, but it was allowed to continue in force, and the trustees of Palmer & Co. complained, not without reason, that under these circumstances they found it impossible to realize the debts due to the estate. The chief debtor was Moneer-ool-moolk a near relative of the Nizam, and the ostensible prime minister. He had made over some of his jageers to Palmer & Co., and the rents had been duly collected and regularly applied to the liquidation of his debts, which had been fully effected, together with interest, at the rate of twelve per cent. The remainder of their demand consisted simply of a balance of interest beyond that rate. Decrees had been obtained for this claim in the local courts, but it was difficult to execute them against one who occupied so high a position in the state without strong external pressure. Application was accordingly made on the subject to the Court of Directors, who drafted a reply in July, 1830, in which the

Digitized by Google

Resident was forbidden to interfere in the matter. But the President of the Board of Control took a different view of the case, and returned the draft with this material modification, that the Resident was directed not only to inform the Nizam that the Government would hear with much satisfaction that the house had recovered their just claims from their private debtors, but also to adopt measures to promote this object. The Court remonstrated against these alterations, which reversed the policy they had resolutely maintained for ten years, of refusing the influence of their Government in reference to the private debts of the firm. They justly argued that the exorbitant interest which constituted the present claim arose from the risk with which the transaction was originally attended, and from the uncertainty of payment, both of which ceased to exist with the interposition of Government. The remonstrance was not without effect, and the despatch was withheld.

Writ of Mandamus, 1832.

The question slumbered till the beginning of 1832, when the Whigs being in office, the Court of Directors were desired by the Board to prepare a despatch in the room of that to which they had formerly raised objections. But when it arrived in Cannon Row, the President of the Board drew his fatal pen across thirty-three out of its thirty-seven paragraphs, and substituted ten of his own. In this amended despatch the Court were required to declare their conviction that the joint interposition of our Government and that of the Nizam would be requisite to bring the matter in dispute to a final settlement. The Nizam was to be allowed the alternative of an arbitration, with an umpire nominated by Government, or a commission appointed by the Governor-General. The Court declined to sanction the authoritative interference of their Government in the adjustment of a debt which they considered unjust, and they refused to adopt the amendments. The President disclaimed any idea of bringing the authority of Government to bear on the case, and made some trivial alterations in the despatch; but the Court justly remarked that in the relative position of the

Digitized by Google

parties at Hyderabad, no interference of the head of the Government of India could be divested of the character of authority; and they proceeded to cancel both the amended and the original despatch. The correspondence on this subject was extended over eight months, but nothing could shake the resolution of the Directors. They persisted in refusing to sign and transmit the despatch, and at length informed the President that "they had nothing to do but to leave the law to take its course." He immediately applied to the Court of King's Bench for a writ of mandamus to compel the Directors to adopt the despatch as dictated by the Board, and they were constrained to yield to this irresistible argument; but at the same time they recorded their solemn protest against the orders which they had been compelled to sign as their own act and deed. The debt of the minister was settled by Mr. Macleod, the umpire appointed by Government, but upon the preposterous principle of allowing interest against the debtor to the utmost farthing, and refusing interest on the payments which had been successively made by him; and the transaction ended with the same disregard of justice with which it had been commenced and carried on.

The Lucknow Bankers, 1832.

During these transactions, a still more objectionable case was brought under discussion in England. Between the years 1792 and 1797 the Nabob of Oude had borrowed large sums of money from Europeans and natives for his voluptuous pleasures. The chances of repayment were very remote, and altogether uncertain; and the charge for interest was proportionately high. He was at length awakened to a sense of his increasing embarrassments by the representations of the Resident, and began in earnest to compound with his creditors. The Europeans were offered better terms than the natives; but all parties were prevailed on to accept the composition, with the exception of the eminent banking firm of Monohur Doss, from whom he had borrowed about eleven lacs of rupees for the support of his wild beasts, and for the "cattle department." Soon after

Digitized by Google

the king died, and his successor repudiated the debt. The bankers eventually engaged the services of a Mr. Prendergast who had amassed a fortune as a trader at Lucknow, and, like Mr. Paull, obtained a seat in Parliament on his return to England. He brought the claims of his clients before the House for the first time in 1811, but though he met with no success, he continued for twenty years to make the most strenuous efforts in a spirit of indomitable perseverance to promote their suit, both in Parliament and in the courts of law. But the Court of Directors invariably refused to enforce an unacknowledged and unproved claim against one who had not contracted the debt, and whom they recognized and treated as a sovereign prince. In this equitable decision they were fully supported by Lord Hastings, who, though he had on one occasion directed the Resident to mention the claim to the Nabob, yet, finding him determined to resist it, at once decided that it was not a case in which the British Government would be warranted in affording any official support. Mr. Canning went still further, and directed the Court to inform the Governor-General that they were so clearly aware of the difficulty of divesting a friendly communication to a weaker power of the character of authority, that they positively forbade the subject to be brought again before the Nabob by any of the officers of Government. But in 1830 the President of the Board of Control was persuaded to lend a favourable ear to the demands of Mr. Prendergast's clients, now swelled, by the accumulation of interest, to a crore of rupees. He affirmed, that while he duly honoured the principle of non-interference, he considered the present an exceptional case, and that it was his determination to make our representations to the king of Oude, "direct and formal." It was the day after the Court had refused to adopt the obnoxious despatch to Hyderabad, regarding the claims of Palmer and Co., that they were desired by the Board to prepare a despatch to the Governor-General directing him to use his utmost efforts to procure the payment of the alleged debt from the king of Oude. The Court felt that any expression

Digitized by Google

of the wishes of Government could only signify compulsion, either by intimidation or by force, and, instead of drawing up a despatch, prepared a vigorous remonstrance, in which they pointed out the impolicy and the injustice of a course which would open the door to endless claims, not only at Lucknow, but at every durbar in India, and beggar half its princes. A despatch was then drawn up in the office of the Board of Control, and transmitted for the acceptance of the Directors, but they passed a resolution, without a single dissenting voice, that this interference with the king of Oude was unjust, inconsistent, and mischievous, and they refused to act, though only ministerially, on the orders of the Board, until compelled to do so by process of law. Mr. Tucker, the deputy chairman, and five of his colleagues, went so far as to declare that even under the pressure of a mandamus they would not consent to affix their signature to an order which was nothing less than "an act of spoliation towards an ancient and prostrate ally." They felt that in India, where the intricate machinery of the home Government was not understood, the act would be regarded as emanating from them, and that the odium of it would be attached to their administration. The steady resistance of the India House produced the happy effect of inducing the President to pause on the threshold of a conflict, which must have been damaging alike to the Ministry and to the Government in India, and the question was allowed to die out.

The Nozeed affair.

The anomalous proceedings of the two Houses at this period in what was termed the "Nozeed affair," exhibited a very disreputable abuse of Parliamentary influence. In 1776, Mr. Hodges, a member of the council at Masulipatam, lent money to the zemindar of Nozeed without the knowledge of the government of Madras, and in direct contravention of the orders of the Court of Directors. In June, 1777, in a communication to Madras, the Court renewed in more peremptory language their former injunction that none of their servants should advance loans on mortgage of lands. Two years after, Mr. Hodges presumed to take a mortgage

Digitized by Google

of a portion of the zemindar's estate for his debt, and the transaction received the support of the Governor and Council of Madras. The whole zemindaree was soon after taken over by Government for arrears of revenue, and an application was made in 1784 to Lord Macartney, then Governor of the Presidency, on the subject of these loans. He considered that the whole transaction was in every respect unwarranted in principle and pernicious in its tendency; but out of delicacy to the preceding Government, which had sanctioned this infraction of the Company's rules, recorded his opinion that the creditors were entitled to some consideration on resigning the district they had so long and so irregularly held on pledge. The Court of Directors, however, resisted every solicitation to entertain the claim. A permanent settlement of the estate was made in 1803, when it was restored to the zemindaree family, leaving them to make any settlement they could effect with the creditors. Nothing further was heard of the claim for nearly thirty years, till the grandson of Mr. Hodges, having some influential friends in Parliament, induced them to bring in a bill to compel the Company to make good the whole demand, which was stated to amount to two lacs of rupees. It will be remembered that when the claims of the nabob of Arcot were introduced to the House, fifty years before, a commission was appointed to investigate their validity, and that ninety per cent. of the amount turned out to be fictitious; but in the present instance, the House passed the bill enjoining the Court of Directors to pay the full amount of this private and illegal claim, without enquiry, from the revenues of India. In the House of Lords it encountered the most strenuous opposition from Lord Ellenborough, and from the Lord Chancellor, Lord Brougham, who deprecated the interference of the Legislature to enforce a claim, "contaminated in its origin, and illegal in its prosecution;" but it passed with a majority of two to one.

Financial Results of Lord William Bentinck's ad-

With the exception of the Coorg campaign, which was concluded in ten days, the administration of

Digitized by Google

ministration, 1828-1835.

Lord William Bentinck was a reign of peace, and it produced the usual result on the finances of India. The reductions which he effected in the various departments of expenditure, combined with an improvement of the sources of revenue, extinguished the deficit of a crore of rupees which he found on his arrival, and enabled him to leave a surplus of a crore and a half on his departure in 1835. The magnificent expectations with which the trade of India had been thrown open to the nation in 1813, were but partially realized in the following twenty years, and the returns during Lord William Bentinck's administration exhibited a decrease both of exports and imports. This was to be attributed, in a large measure, to the great crisis of 1833, which brought down the whole commercial fabric of Calcutta.

Fall of the great Houses in Calcutta, 1833.

During the administration of Warren Hastings some free mariners, as the licensed interlopers were designated, opened houses of business in Calcutta on a humble scale, and gathered up the fragments of the trade to England, which dropped from the great monopoly of Leadenhall street. They embarked, moreover, in the country trade, as it was called, from one Indian port to another, and from Calcutta to the eastward, as well as in the internal traffic of the country. The famine on the Coast occasioned by Hyder Ali's irruption into the Carnatic in 1780, created a large demand for freight and the new houses commenced shipbuilding, first at Sylhet and Chittagong, and eventually in Calcutta. They established indigo factories in the interior of the country and drove the drug which had hitherto been furnished from other countries out of the European markets. Their transactions expanded and their prosperity increased with the growth of British power. They acquired the confidence of the native and the European community, and became the bankers of the civil, military, and medical services, whose savings were transferred, month by month, to their coffers, and whose balances were annually augmented, through the process of compound interest. A desk at one of those firms was considered more

Digitized by Google

valuable than a seat in Council, and the retiring partners drew out colossal fortunes, with which, on their return to England, they bought boroughs, and seated themselves in Parliament. The opening of the trade in 1813, brought out to Calcutta a bevy of new adventurers, who were regarded at first with a feeling of contemptuous indifference by the stately old houses. But they were animated with the vigour of youthful enterprise, and gradually undermined the established firms, drawing away the most profitable branches of their business, and leaving them saddled with their old factories and ships which were not worth a fourth of their original cost. The confidence of the public, which had continued unshaken for half a century, received a rude shock in 1830 by the unexpected collapse of the great firm of John Palmer & Co., usually styled the prince of merchants. The other houses, five in number, continued to struggle with increasing embarrassments, and were enabled to remain afloat as long as the credulity of their constituents provided them with deposits sufficient to meet the withdrawal of funds. But the candle at length burnt down into the socket, and they went one by one into the Insolvent Court, which engulfed sixteen crores of rupees. A large portion of this sum consisted of the savings of the services, and the extent of the calamity may be estimated from the remark of Lord William Bentinck, who had heard, he said, to his utter surprise, that a civilian, when pressed to make a purchase after the failures, had actually replied that he could not afford it.

Remarks on Lord W. Bentinck's Administration, 1835.

Lord William Bentinck was residing at the sanitarium of Ootacamund, in the Neelgeree hills, when the new charter reached India, but his health had been so seriously impaired by a constitutional malady, that his physicians considered it unsafe for him to descend into the plains till the cold weather had set in. Sir Frederick Adam, the governor of Madras, and Mr. Macaulay and Colonel Morrison, who had been appointed members of the Supreme Council, were accordingly summoned to join him in the hills, where the first Council under the new Act was

Digitized by Google

held, and the new Government constituted. These proceedings were unavoidably deficient in legal form, but the defect was covered the next year by an Act of indemnity. Lord William Bentinck returned to Calcutta in November, and embarked for his native land in March, 1835, after having held the reins of Government for nearly eight years. His administration marks the most memorable period of improvement between the days of Lord Cornwallis and Lord Dalhousie, and forms a salient point in the history of Indian reform. He repudiated the stationary policy of the Government, and introduced a more liberal and progressive spirit into every department of the state. With the intuition of a great mind, he discovered the weak points of our system of administration, which was becoming effete under the withering influence of routine, and the remedies he applied went to the root of the disease. He infused new blood into our institutions, and started them upon a new career of vigour and efficiency. The marked difference which they presented in the thirty years succeeding his Government, as compared with the thirty years which preceded it, was due entirely to the impulse of his genius, which became the main spring of a long succession of improvements. He was not less bold in the conception of his plans than resolute in the execution of them, to which he was sometimes obliged to sacrifice the amenities of life. He earned the gratitude of the natives by opening an honourable career to them in the government of their own country, and he was rewarded with the gratitude of Christendom for the moral courage he evinced in putting down Suttees. He has been charged with a love of innovation; but, even if the imputation be correct, such an error is far less injurious to the interests of society than the dull stagnation into which the Government was sinking, and which was an unerring symptom of decay. The great defect of his administration was the fluctuation of his political policy; but, the renewal of the non-intercourse system was ordered from England, and though at first supported by his own views, it was gradually modified, as the exigency of circum-

Digitized by Google

stances appeared to demand the adoption of another course for the protection of the people, as in the cases of Coorg and Mysore. The natives vied with the European community in commemorating the blessings of his administration, and united in raising a subscription for the erection of his statue in Calcutta. The pedestal was enriched with groups representing the great and good features of his government, and bore an inscription from the classic pen of Mr. Macaulay:—"This statue is erected to William Cavendish Bentinck, who during seven years ruled India with eminent prudence, integrity, and benevolence; who, placed at the head of a great empire, never laid aside the simplicity and moderation of a private citizen; who infused into Oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom; who never forgot that the end of government is the welfare of the governed; who abolished cruel rites; who effaced humiliating distinctions; who allowed liberty to the expression of public opinion; whose constant study it was to elevate the moral and intellectual character of the Government committed to his charge;—this monument was erected by men who, differing from each other in race, in manners, in language, and in religion, cherish, with equal veneration and gratitude, the memory of his wise, upright, and paternal administration."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CHARTER OF 1833—SIR CHARLES METCALFE'S ADMINISTRATION—BENEVOLENT EXERTIONS OF THE COMPANY'S GOVERNMENT, 1833–1836.

The New Charter; Extinction of the China Trade, 1833.

THE period of twenty years for which the commercial and political privileges of the Company had been renewed in 1813, being about to expire, Lord

Digitized by Google

Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control, moved for a Select Committee in 1830, to collect information regarding the finances, trade, and revenue, and the judicial administration of the Indian empire. The report was presented in August, 1832, and, including the oral and documentary evidence, filled nine closely printed quarto volumes. The Tory Ministry having been displaced by their rivals, it fell to the lot of Mr. Charles Grant, the new President of the Board, to introduce to the notice of the House the question of the new Charter, as it was inappropriately designated. With more than the talent of his father, who was for twenty years the presiding genius of Leadenhall Street, though with less than his industry, he inherited all his zeal for the moral and intellectual improvement of India.

The two principal questions which demanded the attention of the House were the continuance of the China monopoly, and of the Government of India, in the hands of the Company. The merchants and manufacturers of England demanded with an irresistible voice that the trade to China should be thrown open to the enterprise of the nation, and the first line of "hints" for the new Charter drawn up by the Board of Control contained the ominous words "the China monopoly to cease." The Company strenuously resisted the extinction of their only surviving commercial privilege, and endeavoured to show that without this monopoly they would be unable to carry on the government of India, inasmuch as it was the profits of their trade which had supplied the deficiency of their territorial revenues. On the other hand, it was as resolutely affirmed that the trade had resulted in a loss, and had been sustained by territorial funds. It was, however, beyond the power of any Ministry, Whig or Tory, to prolong the monopoly in the face of universal opposition, and the Court of Directors were obliged to submit to the extinction of it. The Company was thus finally divested of its commercial character, and the last remaining monopoly of the reign of Queen Elizabeth was extinguished, after a duration of nearly two centuries and a half. The

Digitized by Google

Company was required to dispose of its magnificent fleet, to the great chagrin of the old civilians, one of whom was heard to enquire "of what use it was for their honourable masters to send them out to India to make fortunes, if they did not send ships to take them home when the fortunes were made?" The assets of the Company after a faithful scrutiny were estimated at twelve crores of rupees; they realized within a tenth of that sum, and were applied to the objects of the Government in India, with the exception of two crores appropriated to the formation of a guarantee fund. The capital stock of the Company amounted to six crores, and the new Charter Act ordained that interest at the rate of ten and a half per cent. on this sum should be provided from the revenues of India for a period of forty years. The intrinsic value of the stock in the market was consequently doubled. The guarantee fund was to be invested in Government securities, to accumulate at compound interest, till it amounted at the end of that period to twelve crores, with which the proprietors were to be paid off.

Continuation of the Government of India with the Company, 1833.

The India Bill proposed that the government should be entrusted for twenty years longer to the Company, and it was passed without any difficulty. The nation, having secured its own pecuniary interests in regard to the China trade, treated this imperial question, though it involved the interests of a hundred millions of the subjects of the Crown, with profound indifference. The House of Commons exhibited unequivocal signs of impatience and disgust whenever it was brought forward. During the discussions the benches were never as full as during a turnpike debate, and Mr. Macaulay truly observed that a broken head in Coldbath Fields excited greater interest in the House than three pitched battles in India. The Court of Directors made a strong effort to obtain the privilege of an appeal to some higher authority in cases of a difference of opinion with the Board of Control, but the attempt was successfully opposed, and the writ of mandamus was still suspended over their heads.

Digitized by Google

On the other hand, the Ministers endeavoured to obtain a veto on the power vested in the Court by former Acts of recalling the Governor-General, the Governors, and the Commander-in-chief, but the India House resisted the proposal with such pertinacity that it was at length abandoned. Several important changes were likewise made in the constitution and policy of the Government in India. A fourth Presidency was constituted to embrace the north west provinces. A commission was also appointed to consist of men of experience in the administration of justice in India, and one or two English barristers, to report on the practicability of establishing a uniform system of law and judicature throughout the Indian empire. The power of legislation was now for the first time conferred on the Government of India, and the enactments which, under the advice of Sir William Jones in 1790, had been modestly designated Regulations, were now, under the advice of Mr. Macaulay, dignified with the name of Acts. At the same time the privilege of enacting laws was withdrawn from the subordinate Presidencies, and the Governor-General in Council was invested with power to legislate for the whole empire, including all persons, British, foreign, or native, all places, and all things, as well as all courts, whether created by the local Government or established by Royal charter, but with certain necessary reservations touching the prerogatives of the Crown and the authority of Parliament. A fourth member was added to the Council, who was to be an English jurist of reputation, and the office was rendered illustrious by the genius and labours of Mr. Macaulay. Two of the provisions of the Bill afforded an index of the growth of liberal principles in England,—the admission of natives to all offices, and the permission granted to Europeans to hold lands. Forty years before this period, Lord Cornwallis had pronounced the natives unfit to take any share in the government of their own country, and resolved to work the machinery by European agency alone. The Charter of 1833 enacted that no native of India, nor any natural born

Digitized by Google

subject of His Majesty, should be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour. To this liberal measure the Court of Directors gave their unqualified consent, but the clause which sanctioned the purchase of land by Europeans and which contained the germ of colonization was introduced and passed in direct opposition to their wishes. The power to exclude interlopers from the sphere of their operations was among the earliest privileges conferred on them by Queen Elizabeth, and it was confirmed to them by various statutes for two centuries. It was designed at first only to protect their commercial enterprises, but was made applicable to their territorial possessions when they had become sovereigns. It was the most cherished privilege of Leadenhall Street, and the Directors clung to it with unabated tenacity, even after they had consented to relinquish their trade. The Charter of 1813 had permitted the free resort of Europeans to India, but excluded them from forming any settlement in it, by the purchase or lease of lands. Meanwhile, the cultivation of indigo by European capitalists, under cover of fictitious leases which were winked at by the local authorities, had increased to such an extent as to enrich the maritime trade with an additional article of export of the value of a crore and a half of rupees a-year. Lord William Bentinck was anxious to relieve this enterprise from the restraints imposed upon it by the prejudices of the India House, and to legalize these leases for the culture of indigo, as well as for other staple products, but this slight relaxation of the old system of restriction was peremptorily negatived by the Court of Directors. The arguments of Lord William Bentinck, however, and of his liberal colleague, Sir Charles Metcalfe, carried more weight with the Ministry, and a clause was introduced into the bill which granted permission to Europeans to settle in the country and acquire unrestricted rights and interests in the land.

Character of the Company's government, 1833.

The separation now effected of the functions of state from all commercial speculations served to give a more elevated tone to the views and policy

Digitized by Google

of the Court of Directors, and to impart a more efficient character to their administration. The feelings with which they entered on the imperial duties to which their attention was now to be exclusively devoted were eloquently expressed in a despatch to the Government of India, which was drawn up by Mr. Mill: "In contemplating the extent of legislative power thus conferred on our supreme Government, and in the second instance, on ourselves, in reflecting how many millions of men may, by the manner in which it shall be exercised, be rendered happy or miserable, in adverting to the countless variety of interests to be studied, and of difficulties to be overcome in the execution of this mighty trust, we feel the weight of responsibility under which we have been conjointly laid. . . We feel confident that to this undertaking your best thoughts and care will be immediately and perseveringly applied, and we invite the full, the constant, and the early communication of your sentiments in relation to it. On our part we can venture to affirm that no endeavour shall be wanting in promoting your views and perfecting your plans. . . . And we trust that by the blessing of God on our united labours the just and beneficent intentions of this country in delegating to our hands the legislative as well as executive administration of the weightiest, the most important and the most interesting of its transmarine possessions will be happily accomplished." These enlightened sentiments were faithfully reflected in the correspondence and the proceedings of the Court of Directors during the twenty-five years they continued to administer the government of India. Relieved from the management of a large mercantile establishment and the influences inseparable from it, their minds rose to a level with the great political trust confided to them by their country, and it may be affirmed without the risk of contradiction that, notwithstanding an occasional outburst of traditional and narrow-minded prejudices, the principles and the measures they inculcated on their servants in India were marked by a degree of moderation, wisdom, and beneficence

Digitized by Google

of which it would not be easy to find another example in the history of conquered dependencies.

Sir C. Metcalfe, Governor-General, 1835.

The Act of 1833 erected a fourth Presidency in the north-west provinces, and the distinguished services of Sir Charles Metcalfe were rewarded by his appointment to the governorship of Agra, and likewise to the still more dignified position of provisional Governor-General. He proceeded to the upper provinces in December, 1834, but he had no sooner held his first levée than he was required, in consequence of the premature departure of Lord William Bentinck, to return to Calcutta and assume the charge of the Government of India, which he continued to hold for a twelvemonth. When a youth of sixteen in the college of Fort William he had avowed to one of the professors that he would be satisfied with nothing short of the Governor-Generalship, and he had now reached the summit of his ambition, after a career of thirty-four years. With the exception of Warren Hastings, no member of the Indian civil service had ever been more eminently qualified for this imperial trust, by his natural genius for administration, his sound judgment and large views, as well as by his long and universal experience. He began his political career in Lord Wellesley's office, and received the first rudiments of statesmanship under his tuition. He was entrusted with the management of important diplomacy before he was twenty-five, and he had subsequently taken a prominent part in the political movements of every court, from Hyderabad to Lahore. There were few important movements of his time which had not enjoyed the benefit of his co-operation, or advice. His experience had not been limited to a single province, but embraced the entire range of the empire, and he was thus enabled to take the same interest in the development of every division of it. The new character which the growth of British ascendency had gradually imparted to the policy of the various native courts had been moulded, for the most part, under his eye, and there was no other officer in

Digitized by Google

India who possessed the same extensive knowledge of the antecedent as well as the existing feelings and aspirations, the fears, and cabals of the native courts, or who enjoyed in the same degree the respect and confidence of the native princes.

Lord Heytesbury and Lord Auckland, 1835.

On receiving the resignation of Lord William Bentinck, the Court of Directors requested Mr. Mountstewart Elphinstone to allow himself to be put in nomination for the Governor-Generalship, but he declined the honour on the ground of his feeble health. They then proceeded to pass a resolution, by a majority of fifteen to two, to the effect "that adverting to the public character and services of Sir Charles Metcalfe, it would be inexpedient at present to make any other arrangement for supplying the place of Governor-General." But the Whigs who were then in power, were little disposed to confirm this choice. Mr. Canning, when President of the Board of Control, had recorded his opinion in December 1820 that "the case could hardly be conceived in which it would be expedient that the highest office of the government of India should be filled otherwise than from England, and that one main link at least between the system of the Indian and the British Government ought for the advantage of both to be invariably maintained." Mr. Charles Grant, the President of the Board at this period, informed the Court that His Majesty's Ministers saw much to enjoin the continuance of this general practice, and nothing to recommend a departure from it. The Court of Directors remonstrated with great warmth against the adoption of a principle which involved the wholesale exclusion of their servants from the highest prize in their service, and there was every prospect that the unseemly contest between the Court and the Ministry in 1806 would be renewed, when the Whigs were obliged to give place to a Tory cabinet. Lord Ellenborough who succeeded Mr. Grant lost no time in offering the post to Mr. Mountstewart Elphinstone, and laid claim to the merit of having exhibited a more

Digitized by Google

liberal spirit than the preceding administration. The flourish would have been more legitimate if the offer had been made to Sir Charles Metcalfe who would have welcomed it, and not to Mr. Elphinstone who it was well known would decline it. The vacant office was conferred on Lord Heytesbury, a diplomatist of European reputation. He was sworn in at the India House, received the prescribed allowance for his outfit, and the usual farewell entertainment at the London Tavern, but on the eve of his embarkation, Sir Robert Peel's Ministry was subverted, and the Whigs again came into power, with Sir John Hobhouse as President of the Board. The Tory Government which succeeded to power in 1807 had refrained from interfering with the appointment of Lord Minto by their Whig predecessors, though he had not left the shores of England when they came into office. In like manner, the Duke of Wellington had not thought fit to disturb the appointment which Lord William Bentinck had received from his political opponent, Mr. Canning, when it was in his power to cancel it. But one of the first acts of the Whigs when they returned to Downing Street was to revoke the appointment of Lord Heytesbury, and the exercise of his power was limited to the bestowal of the writership, which was courteously placed at the disposal of each newly appointed Governor-General, on his nephew, Mr.—now Sir Cecil—Beadon. The Court protested with great vehemence against a proceeding which made the vital interests of the British empire in India subordinate to the interests of political partizanship in England; but Sir John Hobhouse replied that what he had to consider was merely whether the Ministry would become responsible for Lord Heytesbury's administration of the government in India, and, not wishing to assume this responsibility on themselves, they had taken the simple and obvious mode of cancelling his appointment. The explanation was more plausible than satisfactory, inasmuch as it has always been considered a principle of vital importance to protect the government of India from the disturbing influences of party politics in

Digitized by Google

England. Lord Auckland, who had been the Whig first Lord of the Admiralty, was nominated Governor-General.

Liberation of the press, 1835. The great measure which has rendered the administration of Sir Charles Metcalfe memorable in the history of British India was the liberation of the press the position of which at this period was altogether anomalous. At Madras, there was no legal restriction on it. At Bombay it was free at the Presidency, and fettered in the provinces. In Bengal the illiberal and stringent law passed by Mr. Adam was still on the statute book: but after two or three journals had been suppressed, and two refractory editors had been expelled the country, it was found impossible to enforce it without inflicting great embarrassment and odium on the Government. During the last five years of Lord Amherst's administration, and the whole period of Lord William Bentinck's government, the law remained a dead letter, and the press was practically as free as in England. The Charter Act of 1833 had conferred the power of legislating for all India on the Supreme Council, and a law on the subject of the press which should embrace every portion of the empire, and establish uniformity of practice at all the Presidencies, became a manifest necessity. The power of deportation had been withdrawn from the Government. Europeans were, moreover, privileged to settle as colonists in India, and they naturally expected to enjoy the same liberty of giving expression to their opinions which their fellow countrymen possessed in other dependencies of the Crown. Lord William Bentinck had acknowledged that it would be impossible to leave the question of the press as it stood. A few weeks before his departure, the inhabitants of Calcutta had petitioned for a repeal of Mr. Adam's Regulation, and he assured them that the unsatisfactory state of the laws relating to the press had not escaped his notice, and that he trusted a system would be established at no distant period, which, while it gave security to every person engaged in the fair discussion of public measures, would effectually secure the Government against sedition, and individuals against

Digitized by Google

calumny. Sir Charles Metcalfe had always been an ardent advocate of the liberty of the press, and had declared five years before his elevation "that if he were sovereign lord and master he would give it full swing." He remarked that it was clear the liberty of the press would come, that Government could not prevent it without a despotism and an oppression contrary to its own disposition, and totally opposed to British institutions, and that it would be better to give it with a good grace than to wait till it was extorted. It was with these sentiments he entered on the duties of Governor-General, and he lost no time in bringing in a Bill for carrying these liberal views into effect. The Supreme Council had recently been strengthened by the accession of Mr. Macaulay, who gave his cordial support to the measure, and recorded his opinion in a masterly minute worthy of the author of the Essay on Milton. An Act was accordingly passed in September, 1835, which repealed all the Regulations by which the press had been muzzled, and established its freedom upon the solid foundation of law.

Result of the liberty of the press, 1835.

The Act was received with feelings of enthusiasm by the European community in India, and the principal inhabitants of Calcutta, including the native gentry most eminent in rank and accomplishments, met and voted an address of thanks to Sir Charles Metcalfe for the boon he had conferred on the country, and raised subscriptions to commemorate it by the erection of a noble hall, which bears his name. In his reply to the address he said that "the Act evinced to the world that the government of the Company desired no concealment, that it was happy to have the most minute particulars of its Indian administration scrutinized, and displayed to the gaze of the universe, that it sought information and instruction wherever they could be found, and did not wish to rule India as a conquered, ignorant, and enslaved, but as a cherished, enlightened, and free country." The experience of thirty years has proved that the apprehensions of those who objected to it on the ground of

Digitized by Google

public safety were without any foundation. At the India House, however, the highest authority in the Court, Mr. Edmonstone, maintained that "the unrestricted discussion of public subjects and public measures, and the latitude of observation on the Directors and persons high in office, must necessarily diminish that deference and respect in which it is of so much importance that the Government should be held." But no one will question the fact that Lord Dalhousie obtained as much "deference and respect" when the press was free, as Lord Wellesley received when its voice was stifled. The press has, in fact, been found to be rather the handmaid than the antagonist of Government, and the efficiency of the public administration has been indefinitely promoted by the freedom and independence of its remarks. It has placed the salutary check of exposure on the subordinate functionaries of the state, and given the Government the eyes of Argus to watch the working, and to detect the deficiencies of its vast and complicated machinery. By permitting a more unrestricted publication of opinions in a conquered country than is enjoyed in many of the European states, the ruling power has afforded an unequivocal proof of the benevolent spirit of its intentions and measures. No occasion has since arisen to call for the interference of the public authorities except during the great crisis of the mutiny of the sepoys in 1857, when the liberty of the press was suspended, just as the Habeas Corpus Act would have been suspended in England on a similar emergency.

Reduction of the Government of Agra, 1835.

While Sir Charles Metcalfe was officiating in Calcutta as Governor-General, an important change was made in England in the character and position of the Government of Agra which had been conferred on him. The Court of Directors had always been opposed to the establishment of a fourth Presidency upon the model of those already existing at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta. They considered that the exigencies of the public service might be fully provided for by the more modest and less costly machinery of a Lieutenant-Governorship. The Board of Control, who had

Digitized by Google

taken a different view of the subject, were at length brought to concur with the India House, and an Act was accordingly passed in Parliament, in 1835, empowering the Court to cut down the scheme to a subordinate lieutenancy. Sir Charles Metcalfe felt a natural repugnance to descend to the inferior position of a lieutenant of the Governor-General, after having himself occupied that supreme post, and he formed the determination to retire from the service; but the chairman of the Court intimated to him that it was their unanimous wish and hope, that, acting on those high and patriotic principles which it was well known had always governed his conduct, he would be disposed to retain the office on the reduced scale, and thus enable them to secure his highly valuable services at Agra, and, should the contingency happen, at the head of the Supreme Government. In the hope of inducing him to accede to their wishes, he was named a third time provisional Governor-General, and decorated with the Grand Cross of the Bath. Lord Auckland, who had assumed charge of the Government, joined his own solicitations to those of the Court, and Sir Charles Metcalfe yielded to the kindness of this importunity, and took his departure for Agra, after a continued residence of eight years in Calcutta, during which he toiled seven and eight hours daily, without any interval of relaxation.

Displeasure of the Court, 1836.

But he was not destined to remain there long. Soon after his arrival, he learned that the press law had exasperated the India House and produced a complete revulsion of feeling regarding him and his merits. For two centuries the Company had been nurtured amidst the sensibilities which the despotism of a monopoly always begets. During the past ten years in which the press had been practically without restraint in India, its remarks on the Court of Directors had not been sufficiently deferential, and its tone was not likely to improve after it had become legally free. The East India Company now governed an empire as large as that of the Cæsars, but it was not easy for them entirely to

Digitized by Google

shake off the old associations of the counting-house. They looked upon the freedom of the press with the same aversion which they had formerly felt regarding the freedom of trade, and the free admission of Europeans into India; and it was not long before an opportunity occurred of giving the author of this measure an indubitable token of their displeasure. The Government of Madras had unexpectedly become vacant, and Sir Charles Metcalfe reasonably expected that it would have been conferred on him, more especially as he had consented to sacrifice his own feelings, and accept an inferior appointment at Agra, out of deference to the wishes of the Court. But although they had been ready a twelvemonth before to do battle with the Ministers of the Crown to secure him the Governor-Generalship, they would not now condescend to mention his name in connection with the Government of that Presidency. Lord William Bentinck generously came forward, and urged his claims with great zeal on the India House, but found, to his mortification, that while there was a ready and universal acknowledgment of his great services and his pre-eminent qualifications, there was also a general avowal that his late proceedings regarding the press had cancelled all claim to their consideration. Lord William then appealed to the justice of Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister: "Let the worst possible construction," he said, "be put on this act and the motives of it, it surely ought not to have cast into the shade the thirty-six years of uninterrupted service in the highest appointments in which no man ever bore a higher character for high mindedness, usefulness, and ability. . . . Pray excuse this long appeal. We served together for seven years. His behaviour to me was of the noblest kind. He never cavilled on a trifle, and never yielded to me on a point of importance." But this appeal was equally unavailing. Sir Charles Metcalfe had always manifested the utmost loyalty and devotion to "his Honourable Masters" in Leadenhall Street, and he looked for their approbation and confidence in return. He therefore lost no time in writing to Mr. Melvill.

Digitized by Google

the Secretary of the India House, stating that reports had been for some time in circulation that he had fallen under the displeasure of the Court, and had lost the Government of Madras in consequence of the law he had passed as Governor-General in Council legalizing the liberty of the press. If this misfortune had befallen him, he had no wish to retain by forbearance an office conferred on him when he was honoured with their confidence; if that confidence was gone, it was his earnest entreaty that they would withdraw from him the provisional appointment of Governor-General, or otherwise intimate their pleasure that he might retire from their service, as he could not reconcile it to himself to hold his office on mere sufferance, or to serve in any capacity under the stigma of displeasure and distrust. The Court kept the letter four months without acknowledgment, and then sent him a curt and contemptuous reply. Mr. Melvill was "commanded to express the Court's regret that he should have made a communication which appeared to them to have been altogether unnecessary, as the continuance in him, provisionally, of the highest office which it was in the power of the Court to confer, might have satisfied him that their confidence had not been withdrawn." The day after the receipt of this letter, he tendered his resignation to Lord Auckland, and his connection with the Government of India was brought to an abrupt termination by treatment similar to that which had been inflicted on his great predecessors who had been instrumental in building up the empire, but had incurred the displeasure of the Court of Directors. The services which the Company thought fit to discard were fully appreciated by the Crown, and Sir Charles Metcalfe was entrusted, successively, with the government of two of the most important of the Crown colonies, and raised to the peerage.

Remarks of Sir C. Metcalfe's administration, 1836.

Since the departure of Warren Hastings, no Indian ruler has been overwhelmed with such a profusion of honorable testimonials from all classes, European and native, as Sir Charles Metcalfe. He was the

Digitized by Google

pride and ornament of the service; his hospitality was princely, and his generosity almost without bounds, while his genial temper created a perpetual sunshine around him. But it is to be regretted that with all his high qualifications, he took little, if any, interest in the establishment of steam communication, or the opening of the Indus to commerce, or, indeed, in any of the plans for the promotion of material improvements in India which distinguished Lord William Bentinck's administration. This was the natural result of his long residence in India. An ardent zeal for such improvements is scarcely to be expected from those whose habits have become reconciled to the stationary associations to which they have been accustomed. With an occasional and rare exception, the government of any local functionary who has been raised to supreme power, however beneficial in the various departments of administrative reform, has been marked by the dulness of material progress. It is to a European mind like that of Lord William Bentinck or Lord Dalhousie, fresh from scenes of activity in Europe, and imbued with the animation they inspire, that we must look for a spirit of enterprise in this important department of government. On the other hand, a Governor-General coming direct from England, is generally apt to be more sensitive to the political dangers of the empire, than an Indian Governor-General who has been accustomed to contemplate them as the normal condition of our rule, and to hold himself ever ready to encounter them. Lord Wellesley and Lord Minto were more vividly impressed with a sense of these perils than Sir John Shore or Sir George Barlow. But in the case of Sir Charles Metcalfe and Lord William Bentinck, this feeling was reversed. Lord William Bentinck always expressed the strongest confidence in the security of the empire, while Sir Charles Metcalfe asserted that our government, which was one of conquerors and foreigners, was always precarious, and that as it arose, so to say, in a day, it would disappear in a night. "My notions," he said, "of Indian policy begin and end in a powerful and efficient army; our real strength

Digitized by Google

consists in the few European regiments, scattered singly over a vast space of subjugated territory. My general creed is confined to two grand specifics—army and colonization."

Benevolent efforts of the British Government.

The suppression of barbarous rites, and the introduction of the blessings of civilization and knowledge, are among the most important functions of European power in Asia; and as this narrative draws to the close of a period of peace which lasted twelve years, and approaches a period of war, of nearly equal duration, a fitting opportunity is presented of adverting to the efforts made by the Government of the East India Company to fulfil these noble obligations. The early proceedings of British agents in India, however, were not, it must be admitted, marked by that spirit of humanity which has since pervaded them. The first rough code of Regulations promulgated by Mr. Hastings in 1772, embodied the recommendation of the Committee of Circuit, and ordained that every convicted dacoit should be executed in his own village, and that his entire family should be sold as slaves. For twenty-five years, moreover, after the establishment of the Company's authority in Bengal, the barbarous practice which had previously prevailed of punishing criminals by mutilation was perpetuated in the courts over which European and Christian gentlemen presided, and it was distinctly authorized by the Regulations of 1787. It was not till 1791 that Lord Cornwallis suppressed this revolting custom, and enacted that the offender should be subjected to fourteen years' imprisonment, where he had formerly been deprived of two limbs, and to seven years with hard labour where the loss of a single limb had been usually inflicted. But the growth of benevolent principles in the administration of India steadily kept pace with their development in the government of England, and rendered the supremacy of the Company a blessing to tribes which had been for ages immersed in barbarism. The prohibition of human sacrifices at Saugor, the abolition of Suttees, and the extinction of Thuggee have been

Digitized by Google

already noticed, and we now proceed to narrate the labours of the public servants of the Company in other spheres of philanthropy.

Augustus Cleveland, 1784.

In the van of those who have shed a lustre on the British administration by their earnest efforts to civilize barbarous and predatory tribes stands Augustus Cleveland of the Bengal Civil Service. The hills and forests of the Rajmahal district were inhabited by a race of men of wild habits and savage disposition, who had been accustomed from time immemorial to make raids on the lowlands lying between their hills and the Ganges. Soon after the establishment of the Company's government their feelings appear to have been exasperated by the treacherous slaughter of some of their chiefs by the neighbouring zemindars, and they avenged themselves by depopulating the villages and rendering all travelling by land or by water impossible. To check their inroads a corps of light infantry was stationed at the foot of the hills under Captain Brooke, who pursued them into their fastnesses, and created a salutary dread of British power. He was succeeded by Captain Brown who endeavoured to reclaim the savages by kindness and laid the foundation of that system of conciliation which was subsequently completed by Mr. Cleveland, when placed in charge of the district. His benevolent labours were gracefully commemorated by the elegant pen of Warren Hastings in the inscription on the monument erected by Government, "in honour of his character and for an example to others" —"To the memory of Augustus Cleveland, Esquire, who without bloodshed or the terror of authority, employing only the means of conciliation, confidence, and benevolence, attempted and accomplished the entire subjugation of the lawless and savage inhabitants of the jungleterry of Rajmahal, inspired them with a taste for the arts of civilized life and attached them to the British Government by a conquest over their minds, the most permanent as the most rational mode of dominion." Mr. Cleveland died in 1784 at the early age of

Digitized by Google

twenty-nine, and the zemindars erected a monument to his memory, which is still held in the highest veneration by the inhabitants both of the hills and the plains.

The Bheels, 1790. Candesh, in Western India, watered by the Taptee, was a great and flourishing province under the Moguls, covered with rich cultivation, and studded with prosperous towns. But the tide of Mahratta desolation passed over it, and the extortions of the Peshwa's officers, more especially of his Arab mercenaries, combined with the ravages of the Pindarees completed its ruin, and left it almost without inhabitants. On the downfall of the Peshwa it was brought under British rule, and one of its districts, inhabited chiefly by Bheels, was formed into a separate collectorate. They are usually considered one of the aboriginal tribes, driven to seek refuge in the hills by the progress of Hindoo invasion. It was at a fountain in this wild region that Kishnu, the deified hero of the great Sanscrit epic, was slain. The Bheels were a race of unmitigated savages, without any sense of natural religion, violating all law, defying all authority, and habitually indulging in drink, licentiousness, and murder. They eschewed all honest labour, and lived by the chase or by plunder. From their mountain fastnesses they poured down on the plains, sacked the villages, drove off the cattle, and carried away the chief men whom they held to ransom. By the former rulers of the country they had been hunted like wild beasts, and as every man's hand was against them, their hand was against every man. The measures which were at first adopted by the British functionaries to reclaim them were marked by an excess of severity which defeated its own object, and demonstrated that the gibbet was not the fittest instrument of civilization. The task was at length confided to the late Sir James Outram, then a lieutenant of Native Infantry, a man of benevolent sympathies, sound judgment, and unflinching perseverance. The lawlessness of the barbarians when he took charge of the agency had risen to a pitch which was found to be unsupportable and he

Digitized by Google

considered it necessary to teach them the power of Government as a preliminary step towards enabling them to appreciate its kindness. He pursued them into their rugged hills with the greatest vigour, and defeated a large body which had assembled for a foray. The captives he made were treated with kindness, and sent back with conciliatory messages and offers of employment to the chiefs. It was the first act of kindness the wild men had ever experienced from the rulers of the country, and they responded to it with cheerfulness. A friendly intercourse was gradually established with the chiefs; Lieutenant Outram listened to their tales, joined in their pastimes, feasted them when well, and prescribed for them when ill. Having succeeded in gaining their confidence, he proceeded to organize a Bheel corps, which was filled up by degrees and served to diffuse a principle of order and obedience throughout the tribe, and enabled him in the course of a twelvemonth to report that not a single case of robbery had occurred within a circle of thirty miles. To carry forward the work of civilization, special European officers were appointed as Bheel agents, with instructions to mix with the people and settle their disputes, to encourage industrial pursuits and to reward the deserving with a grant of land rent free for a season, as well as to supply them with a plough and bullocks and a small advance of money. By these efforts, the object of converting them into agriculturists was accomplished, and little colonies of husbandmen sprung up in every direction in these primeval forests. A Bheel police was established to maintain the peace of the country, and a province which had hitherto been desolated by gangs of marauders, was in 1829 pronounced by the Collector to be in a state of profound repose. The Court of Directors expressed their cordial commendation of this happy conversion of a predatory tribe into useful and obedient subjects of the state, and a prosperous agricultural community: "This signal instance," they wrote, "of what we have so often impressed on you—the superior efficacy of conciliatory means in

Digitized by Google

reducing uncivilized and predatory tribes to order and obedience—is one of the most gratifying events in the recent history of British India."

Mairwarra, 1832. In the year 1818 Sindia ceded to the Company the province of Ajmere in Rajpootana which included the hill tract of Mairwarra, about ninety miles in length, and from six to twenty in breadth. It was inhabited by the Mairs, an aboriginal race, living in their native hills almost in a state of nature, the boys tending their flocks of goats, and the men, mounted on their diminutive ponies, passing their time in plunder. They murdered their female offspring, and committed every kind of atrocity without remorse. Captain Hall, who was placed in charge of the country, found it swarming with banditti who set the public authority at complete defiance. He put down all opposition by the strong hand of power, and then determined to make the Mairs the instruments of their own civilization. A Mair battalion was formed, by which suitable employment was provided for the highland chiefs, who proved to be good and loyal soldiers, and contributed essentially to the suppression of crime and the maintenance of the public peace throughout the hills. Courts were established for the adjudication of rights, and the punchayet, or Indian jury, superseded the barbarous ordeal which had hitherto been practised of grasping red-hot shot, or dipping the hand in boiling oil. The Mairs were also in the course of time prevailed on to relinquish the two barbarous customs of female infanticide and the sale of women. The failure of his health obliged Captain Hall to quit his post after he had been employed for fourteen years without intermission in endeavouring to introduce the arts of civilization into this wild region, but happily his mantle fell on Captain Dixon, an officer animated with the same benevolence of heart, who entered upon the duties of his office with a feeling of enthusiasm. He felt that to render his labours successful he must be continually out in camp, in fervid heat or drenching rain, and that he must become a slave to his task

Digitized by Google

until it was fully accomplished. To this honourable bondage he consecrated his official life. He lived among the people, and made himself acquainted with the condition of every village, and often of every household in it. He was without any European assistance, but under his training and discipline his native establishment became thoroughly efficient. To accustom the wild highlanders to habits of agricultural industry, it was above all things necessary to secure a supply of water for their fields. But the fall of rain in that hilly region was very capricious, and when it came could with difficulty be retained for continuous use. He accordingly prevailed on Government to make advances for works of irrigation, and dug reservoirs and wells, and formed embankments to husband and distribute the water. He covered the slopes of the hills with terraces, and by these appliances gave the waste jungle an aspect of luxuriant cultivation. The financial result of this improvement was encouraging in no ordinary degree. The sum advanced by the state for these waterworks—and in India they always return cent. per cent. —was a little above two lacs, while the augmentation of the revenue through the increase of the assessment, exceeded four lacs. The moral result of these labours was seen in the transformation of a wild and predatory tribe into an orderly, docile, and industrious population, with unbounded confidence in their European benefactors. To encourage the resort of traders, Captain Dixon erected a town in the district, and surrounded it with a wall, to give a feeling of security to the immigrants. It appeared to rise in the wilderness with the wand of a magician, and in a short time was filled with two thousand families engaged in mercantile and manufacturing pursuits. In all the annals of the India House there is no record more grateful than that of the energetic and successful labours of these two officers in the civilization of Mairwarra.

Female Infanticide, 1833. In the year 1789, Mr. Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Benares, discovered for the first time that the custom of destroying their female offspring was

Digitized by Google

prevalent among the Rajpoots. After his appointment to the government of Bombay, in 1800, he found that the same barbarous custom existed also to a great extent in the west of India among the Rajpoot tribes, and especially in the Jharijah families of Cutch and Kattiwar. The lowest estimate of victims in these two provinces reached 3,000 a-year; and in the household of the raja not a single female infant had been spared. It was subsequently ascertained to prevail also among the Rajpoots of Joudhpore and Jeypore, and, indeed, throughout the whole extent of Malwa and Rajpootana. The number of victims was computed without exaggeration at 20,000 annually. Throughout a territory 700 miles in extent, stretching from Cutch to Benares, two thirds of the female offspring of the tribes were systematically put to death. These murders were committed generally under the directions of the father, either by starvation or by the administration of drugs; in some cases the mother became the murderer of her own offspring by rubbing her nipples with opium, which speedily extinguished infant life. There was no evidence to show that the custom had a religious origin; it was traced exclusively to the pride of caste. To maintain the honour of his family connections was the one paramount object of the haughty Rajpoot, but owing to the manifold and complicated gradations of rank within the tribe, and the limited number of families with whom a matrimonial alliance could be contracted without dishonour, it was difficult to obtain suitable matches, and for a girl to remain unmarried after she had reached the age of maturity, was regarded as an indelible disgrace. It was likewise considered indispensable that weddings should be celebrated on a scale of magnificence fixed by prescriptive and inexorable usage, and any attempt to abridge it was supposed to indicate the declension of the family. The expense of weddings arose chiefly from the exorbitant demands of the *bhats* and *churruns*, the bards and genealogists of the Rajpoot races, who exercised a more tyrannical influence in the tribe, than the priesthood. They employed themselves in

Digitized by Google

composing ballads which celebrated the antiquity and renown of the family, and its fame throughout the tribe was dependent on their eulogy. They kept the pedigrees and recorded the alliances of the family, which regulated its social position. Their presence was considered indispensable at every marriage festivity, and on some occasions they had been known to flock to a wedding to the number of two or three thousand. To conciliate their good-will, it was necessary to regale them with profusion, and to load them with gifts. If they were satisfied, their ballads traced the family up to the race of the sun or the moon; if otherwise, they revenged themselves by holding it up to the contempt of the country in ribald songs. To avert the disgrace to which the Rajpoot was exposed from these causes, he was prepared to submit to any sacrifice, and to incur any amount of debt, though it might inflict a permanent incumbrance on his property. But every difficulty arising from the risk of mésalliances, and from the extortion of the bards and genealogists was at once removed by extinguishing the life of his female offspring.

Efforts to eradicate the practice, 1834.

The officers of the Company resolved to make a vigorous effort to eradicate this infamous custom. Mr. Duncan took the lead in this benevolent crusade, and exacted a solemn pledge from the Rajpoots, who were British subjects, to relinquish it for ever, and it was soon after prohibited under severe legal penalties. Colonel Walker, the Resident in Cutch, spared no labour to eradicate it by personal importunity and by a judicious exercise of authority, and at length prevailed on the Jharijah chiefs to bind themselves by a written engagement to renounce it, and to expel from the caste any who should be found to practise it. On the strength of these documents it was believed that this inhuman practice had become extinct, and Colonel Walker and the Court of Directors received the hearty congratulations of the benevolent in England and in Europe on the result of their labours. But in the course of time this conclusion was

Digitized by Google

found to be premature; the success which had attended these labours was partial and transient, and in all the provinces in which the practice was supposed to be extinguished, it was discovered to be almost as prevalent as ever. Renewed efforts were made to suppress it, but it was painfully felt that so long as the feelings and the interests of the people indisposed them to aid in the detection of delinquents, our exertions must be impotent; and the public officers appear at length to have resigned themselves to despondency. But in 1834 Mr. Wilkinson, one of the ablest and most philanthropic servants of the Company, and Mr.—the late Sir John—Willoughby, determined to adopt the most vigorous measures to root out the crime. Mr. Wilkinson assembled the chiefs of Central India, who were our allies and not our subjects, and through his personal influence prevailed on them to affix their seals to deeds abandoning the practice, and then issued a notification denouncing it. Lord William Bentinck addressed letters of congratulation, written, as well as signed, by himself, to the Rana of Oodiporé and the other chiefs who had thus pledged themselves to the abolition of the practice, and the Court of Directors ordered special messages of commendation to be conveyed to them. But the chiefs signed the agreement only to deprecate the displeasure and to court the favour of the paramount authority, not from any motives of humanity, and Mr. Wilkinson had the mortification to learn that one of the number had put his own female children to death within two months of signing the deed. A general census of the province of Kattywar was likewise obtained, which revealed the melancholy fact that although the practice had unquestionably diminished, only one girl was to be found to three boys even in the most favourable places, and that in others five-sixths of the female infants had perished by the hands of their own unnatural parents. This discovery only led him to redouble his exertions. He insisted on a periodical census of the inhabitants. He issued fresh proclamations announcing the unshaken determination of Government to exterminate the

Digitized by Google

custom. He offered rewards to informers, and bestowed gifts on those who preserved their offspring. One chief was fined 12,000 rupees, and another sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for having practised infanticide; but this procedure was openly resented as arbitrary and unjust by the other chiefs who still clung to the practice. In these benevolent labours Captain—now Sir Philip—Melvil took a prominent and active part, but he was likewise doomed to disappointment. The nobles of Cutch were successful in resisting the order for a census of the population, which they considered derogatory to the honour of their families. The benevolent efforts of Willoughby, Wilkinson, Melvil, and others were followed by only partial success, because they were not backed, as might have been hoped, by the natural feelings of the people. Humanity has been a plant of slow growth even in England, but in India it can scarcely be said to exist, either among the high caste Rajpoot or the savage Khond. Tribes which professed to be so tender of life as to call on their chiefs to prohibit the slaughter of sheep, were resolutely opposed to the preservation of their own female offspring. This humane work has proved to be the most difficult task we have ever undertaken in India. It was easier to subdue the country than to conquer the blood-thirsty prejudices of its inhabitants. The efforts which have thus been made by a succession of philanthropists for more than half a century to preserve life, and to make the triumphs of humanity co-extensive with the triumph of British arms, have secured to them the gratitude of their own country, though India be not able to appreciate their value. These benevolent labours, notwithstanding every disappointment, must be pursued without relaxation, and they will eventually be crowned with complete success; but this happy consummation is necessarily dependent on the continuance of British power in India, the extinction of which would be followed by the revival of those atrocities which the Company has been employed in putting down.

Human sacrifices The tract of country in the province of Orissa

Digitized by Google

among the Khonds.

lying south of the Mahanuddee in the belt of hills facing the bay of Bengal, is inhabited by the Khonds, an original race which from time immemorial has maintained its primitive language, habits, and superstitions. Some of the tribes have successfully resisted every effort to reduce them to subjection, while others have paid a nominal allegiance to the neighbouring rajas. The revolt of the raja of Goomsur in 1835 determined Government to incorporate his territory with the Company's dominions, and their officers were then for the first time made acquainted with the existence of this singular people, though they dwelt within a few miles of one of the oldest British stations. Their fields were found to be in a high state of cultivation, and their villages swarmed with bullocks, goats, swine, and poultry. The normal pursuit of agriculture was diversified by the chase and by incessant conflicts among the tribes. To such an extent did they pride themselves on the virtue of hospitality that any man who could once make his way to the hearth of his deadly foe, considered himself in perfect safety. The government was patriarchal, hereditary in the family, and elective in the individual. Each tribe possessed a distinct portion of territory which was parcelled out among the different families, and the descent or sale of which was regulated by prescriptive custom. The women were held in high esteem, and no measure was completed without their advice. The men were brave and resolute, but revengeful and the slaves of drink. Of the different tribes in the hills, some abhorred human sacrifices, but practised female infanticide; others were the votaries of the "earth goddess," and firmly believed that the fertility of their fields depended on her favour, which could be secured only by the sacrifice of human life. The victims were called *meriahs* and, though generally obtained by purchase, were often acquired by violence, through the agency of two of the hill tribes, who gained their livelihood by procuring them from the low countries. When it was intended to perform a general sacrifice the villagers within the circuit

Digitized by Google

assembled in the first instance for the performance of religious rites. The three days preceding the sacrifice were spent in frantic dances and drunken revelry. On the last day the associated tribes proceeded with loud huzzas and barbaric music to consummate the act. The *meriah* was in most cases bound to a stake, and the priest inflicted a slight wound with his axe, when the excited crowd rushed forward and cut off slices of flesh from the writhing victim. The villagers then hastened home with the share of flesh they had been so fortunate as to obtain, carefully wrapt up in leaves. The village priest divided it into as many particles as there were heads of families, and the flesh was then buried in the favourite field with the firm conviction that it would ensure a good crop.

Efforts to eradicate the practice, 1829—34.

On the discovery of this infamous custom the Government of Madras resolved to adopt immediate measures to suppress it, and committed the duty to Captain Campbell, who proceeded to summon the chiefs and their followers to his encampment. After dwelling on the atrocity of the practice, he exacted an oath from them to abandon it, the immediate effect of which was the surrender of two hundred victims who had been procured for sacrifice. For four years he continued thus to labour in the cause of humanity till he was obliged to quit the country from the failure of his health; but the good he effected was found to be transient. His course of action was described by the Governor of Madras to consist in entering the hills with an armed force, calling together the influential men of each tribe, denouncing the practice, and demanding delivery of the victims which had been collected. The elders and priests who had taken an oath to abstain from the practice, relapsed into it as soon as they were relieved from this pressure, and for every victim they gave up, another was procured from the plains. It was felt that the partial success of Captain Campbell was delusive, and that no permanent benefit was to be expected from compulsory measures. This was

Digitized by Google

evidenced by the fact that on a subsequent festival no fewer than two hundred and forty victims were collected for sacrifice in one small portion of Khond land. The Marquis of Tweeddale, the Governor of Madras, deemed it indispensable to permanent success to obtain an influence over the hill chiefs, and while they were impressed with a just but favourable opinion of our power, to prevail on them by moral suasion to renounce the rite. Major Macpherson, who had previously been employed in surveying the country, and had accumulated much knowledge of the people, and of their character and circumstances, was intrusted with this duty, and likewise invested with the office of Judge, Magistrate and Collector. His first object was to establish the supremacy of Government throughout the country. He then visited tribe after tribe, entered into free and friendly communications with the people, and by the employment of reason more than of authority, induced a determination to abandon the practice. In return for this concession he offered them the inestimable boon of an authoritative settlement of their mutual disputes, which had never before been decided without bloodshed. With one hand he distributed justice and established tranquillity, with the other he rescued the victims and exacted pledges of discontinuing the rite. The result of these efforts was the extinction of the practice throughout the whole province of Goomsur. These labours were followed up by the establishment of schools, for which he caused suitable books to be compiled in the Orissa character. It was the firm belief of the Khonds that their priests alone could cure their diseases, and the priests had but one prescription—a human sacrifice—for all complaints and wounds. Send us, said the barbarians to the Major, a doctor, and we will make him a god; the request was complied with, and a new and powerful influence was established over them. In the course of time they found that their fields yielded an abundant harvest without human blood, and they concluded that the "earth goddess" had lost her power, and they ceased to pay her homage. Dr. Cadenhead, the

Digitized by Google

energetic assistant of Major Macpherson, was likewise sent into the adjacent district of Boad to put down the rite. The Khonds delivered up more than a hundred victims at his requisition, but not before they had put to death a hundred and twenty as the last act of sacrifice. The uncle of the raja, instigated by one Sam Bisoye, who, while eating the salt of Government, was secretly counteracting all its benevolent efforts, raised an opposition to the British authorities, which was joined by the raja of Ungool, and ripened into an insurrection. The camp of the agent was attacked, and it became necessary to call out a military force. Violent prejudices were excited against Major Macpherson, and the Vice-President in Council allowed himself to be persuaded that the rebellion was directed against him, and not against the authority of Government. The Khond agency became, in fact, a party question, and truth and justice disappeared. While Major Macpherson was engaged with great success in quelling the revolt, he and his assistants were summarily dismissed from their appointments. Mr.—now Sir John—Grant was sent to investigate the charges which had been brought against him, and, on receiving his report, Lord Dalhousie assured Major Macpherson that nothing could in his opinion compensate for the treatment he had received, but that he still enjoyed the undiminished confidence of every member of Government. The Court of Directors pronounced the most favourable judgment on his proceedings and ascribed the extinction of this crime to the judicious and conciliatory measures he had adopted, and to the admirable power of his individual character. After his removal, Colonel Campbell was reappointed to the charge of the district, and completed the work which had been so happily begun. The entire number of victims rescued from death exceeded fifteen hundred; and this atrocious rite, which had probably been practised by the Khonds for as many centuries as the immolation of widows had been practised by the Hindoos, was finally extinguished under the auspices of British humanity.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LORD AUCKLAND'S ADMINISTRATION—THE AFGHAN EXPEDITION, 1836—1842.

Lord Auckland Governor-General, 1836.

LORD AUCKLAND was sworn in as Governor-General on the 20th March, 1836. He entered upon his duties with the most pacific and benevolent intentions. At the farewell entertainment of the Court of Directors at the London tavern he assured them that "he looked with exultation to the new prospects before him as affording him an opportunity of doing good to his fellow creatures, of promoting education and knowledge, and of extending the blessings of good government and happiness to millions in India." For such labours he was eminently qualified by his clear and enlightened views of domestic policy, as well as by his amiable disposition and his active habits. But before he had been six months in Calcutta he perceived a storm gathering in the north-west, and expressed his apprehensions that we might at no very distant period be involved in political, and possibly in military, operations on our western frontier. The complications which arose brought on a great political crisis with which he was not qualified to deal, either by his previous experience, or his mental calibre. He had little reliance on his own judgment, and acted for the most part, under the influence of those who surrounded him, and so the vessel of the state rapidly drifted among the breakers. His administration is almost exclusively comprised in the fatal expedition to Afghanistan, the inception of which may be dated in July, 1837, while the catastrophe occurred in January, 1842, a few weeks before his return to England. To form a correct idea of this momentous transaction which has exercised a powerful influence on the interests and progress of the British empire in the east, it is necessary to trace the convergence of events in Afghanistan and the Punjab, in

Digitized by Google

Persia and in Russia to the point at which it was determined to despatch that ill-starred expedition.

Shah Soojah's attempt, 1833.

Shah Soojah, the exiled monarch of Cabul and the British pensioner at Loodiana, was encouraged by the treachery of Dost Mahomed's brothers to make a second effort in 1833 to recover the throne of Afghanistan. He endeavoured to raise funds by pawning his jewels, but the bankers demanded extravagant security for a very inconsiderable advance. He then applied for aid to Lord William Bentinck, who replied, "My friend, the British Government religiously abstains from intermeddling with the affairs of its neighbours when it can be avoided; to afford you assistance for the purpose you have contemplated would not consist with that neutrality which on such occasions regulates our conduct." The only aid he was enabled to obtain was the payment of his pension four months in advance, to the extent of 16,000 rupees. He invoked the assistance of Runjeet Sing, who proposed various conditions which appeared preposterous and impracticable; and among others the restitution of the sandal-wood gates of the ancient temple of Somnath, which were attached to the tomb of Mahmood at Ghuzni. The Shah replied that the removal of them would cover him with eternal disgrace in the eyes of the faithful, and he referred, likewise, to a current prophecy that whenever the Sikhs obtained possession of them, their government would immediately be overthrown. The surrender of them was not pressed. The ruler of the Punjab was at length induced to countenance the undertaking on condition that the Shah would guarantee to him all the possessions he had acquired in the provinces beyond the Indus. He started on the expedition in February 1833, crossed the Indus without opposition, and reached Shikarpore, where, in the following January, he defeated the Ameers of Sinde, and constrained them to make an immediate payment of five lacs of rupees, and to enter into an engagement to pay an annual tribute for that town. He then pursued his route without interruption to Candahar, and

Digitized by Google

maintained his position before that fortress for a few months, till Dost Mahomed marched down from Cabul, and crushed his army and his hopes. In July, 1834, he fled from Afghanistan to Belochistan, and, in the extremity of his distress, received a generous hospitality from the ruler, Mehrab Khan. He then retraced his steps to his old asylum and his pensionary position at Loodiana in March, 1835. While the Afghans were occupied in repelling the invasion of Shah Soojah at Candahar, Runjeet Sing availed himself of the opportunity to send a large army across the Indus, and definitively incorporated the province of Peshawur with the Sikh dominions, placing it in charge of General Avitabile.

Runjeet's views on Sinde, 1835.

It has been stated in a former chapter that the design on Sinde which Runjeet Sing had long cherished was thwarted by the resolution of Lord William Bentinck to open the navigation of the Indus to commerce, which required the establishment of a preponderating British influence on its banks. At this juncture, a wild and predatory tribe on the right bank of the river made repeated inroads into the Huzara districts which Runjeet Sing had conquered, and his son, Khurruck Sing, and his gallant grandson, Nao Nihal, were sent with a large force to chastise them. But as these attacks were traced to the instigation of the Ameers of Sinde, two of their forts were occupied by the Sikh army, which had been largely reinforced with a view to the conquest of Shikarpore, and the entire subjugation of the province. The Ameers organized their forces for the conflict, and it required all the tact and energy of Colonel Pottinger at Hyderabad, and a strong pressure on the part of Captain Wade at Lahore, to prevent a collision between the two powers which must have resulted in the discomfiture of the Ameers, and the extension of Runjeet Sing's authority throughout the country down to the sea. Captain Wade was obliged to enforce his representations by a prominent allusion to the risk which Runjeet Sing would incur if he pursued these designs in opposition to the wishes of the British

Digitized by Google

Government. On the other hand, his own gallant officers importuned him to resist, at all hazards, the restrictions which were thus imperiously placed on the extension of his territories by the British authorities, but he shook his venerable head and asked them where were now the two hundred thousand Mahratta spears which had once bid defiance to the Company. The feeling of awe which he entertained of the strength and resources of the British Government had recently been heightened by a circumstance which enabled him more fully to appreciate them. Lord William had determined to adopt the policy of substituting English for Persian as the language of diplomatic correspondence with the various native courts in India. Runjeet sent the son of one of his chiefs to Loodiana to master the English language, and on his return to the court caused the map of India one day to be spread out before him, and required the lad to point out the position and boundaries of the Lahore dominions. But what, he asked, are all these red circles which I see spread over the map from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin. They mark the British possessions, replied the youth. In a fit of vexation Runjeet kicked the map away, exclaiming, "it will all become red." On the present occasion, he bowed to the majesty of British power, and relinquished his designs on Sinde; and had the magnanimity to invite the Governor-General and the highest British functionaries to Lahore to the nuptials of his grandson whom he had destined as the conqueror and the ruler of that province.

Dost Mahomed at Peshawur, 1835.

The loss of Peshawur rankled in the bosom of Dost Mahomed, and he determined to make an extraordinary effort to recover it. For this purpose he assumed the character of a *ghazee*, or champion of the faith, and proclaimed a religious war against the infidel Sikhs. The Mahomedan world in Central Asia was immediately in commotion, and from the regions of the Hindoo Koosh, from the wilds of Toorkistan, from the orchards of Kohistan, and from the remote recesses of the mountains

Digitized by Google

thousands poured down on the plain of Peshawur to join the standard of the Prophet, some on horseback, others on foot, promiscuously armed with sword and shield, with bows and arrows, with matchlocks and with spears. The spirit of Runjeet Sing appeared to quail before this host of infuriated fanatics, and, while he advanced to the defence of the province with a large army, he determined also to try the effect of intrigue, and despatched one Harlan, an American adventurer, ostensibly on a mission to Dost Mahomed, but in reality to sow dissensions in his camp. "I divided the brothers," said the unscrupulous envoy, "against the Dost, excited their jealousy of his growing power, and induced one of them, Sultan Mahomed, to withdraw himself suddenly from the encampment with 10,000 of his soldiers. . . This unexpected desertion threw the Afghan camp into a state of inextricable confusion and dismay, and resulted in the total defection of the Dost Mahomed's army, which melted away in the stillness of night. At daybreak not a vestige of the Afghan camp was to be seen where six hours before 50,000 men and 10,000 horse were rife with the tumult of wild emotion." Dost Mahomed returned with deep chagrin to Cabul. On hearing of the arrival of Lord Auckland in the spring of 1836, he addressed a letter of congratulation to him, and in allusion to the unhappy state of his relations with Runjeet Sing, begged him "to communicate whatever might suggest itself to his mind for the settlement of the affairs of the country." Lord Auckland returned a friendly reply, and announced his intention shortly to depute a gentleman to the Ameer's court to discuss questions of commerce, but in reference to the Sikh quarrel remarked, "My friend, you are aware that it is not the practice of the British Government to interfere with the affairs of other independent states." The truthfulness of this declaration was singularly exemplified two years later by the expedition which Lord Auckland sent to Cabul, in conjunction with Runjeet Sing, to dethrone Dost Mahomed. Despairing of any aid from the British Government, the Dost applied at the beginning of 1837 to the

Digitized by Google

Shah of Persia as the "King of Islam," or head of Mahomedanism. In the language of oriental compliment he stated that "his country belonged to the kingdom of Persia, yet disturbance and misery were caused throughout it by the detestable tribe of Sikhs; the misery or welfare of these countries cannot be separated from the interests of the Persian Government. If I am unable to resist that diabolical tribe I have no choice but to connect myself with the English, who will thus obtain complete control over the whole of Afghanistan." Impatient to wipe out the disgrace inflicted on him by the cowardice of his troops at Peshawur, the Dost soon after sent his son, Akbar Khan, with a large army through the Khyber to Jumrood, where a battle was fought on the 30th of April, 1837, in which the Sikhs were completely defeated, and their ablest general, Huree Sing, was killed. Runjeet Sing was at the time engaged at Lahore in celebrating the nuptials of his grandson, and in instituting an order of knighthood, which he styled the order of the Auspicious Star of the Punjab, and of which the first decoration was conferred on Sir Henry Fane, the Commander-in-chief, who had accepted the invitation to be present at these magnificent festivities. They were rudely interrupted by the disaster at Jumrood, but Runjeet Sing made every effort to retrieve his loss. Reinforcements were pushed forward with a degree of promptitude and speed which had never been witnessed before. Colonel Steinbach, one of his European officers, marched with a large body of troops three hundred miles in twelve days, and it is affirmed that field guns were actually dragged from Ramnugur on the Chenab to Peshawur, a distance of two hundred miles, in twelve days. The Afghans gained little by their victory; they were unable to master either Jumrood or Peshawur, and after ravaging the country around returned to Cabul on the approach of the Sikh force. It was at this critical juncture that Lord Auckland's envoy, Captain Burnes, made his appearance at the capital to discourse about trade and manufactures, but the fermentation in Central Asia soon gave a character of political importance to his mission.

Digitized by Google

Progress of Russia.

The Russians, like the Romans, have systematically devoted themselves to the extension of their dominion and power, and for more than a century have prosecuted schemes of aggrandizement in Europe and in Asia, without any relaxation, and without a single failure. "In the course of sixty-four years, dating from 1772," as Mr. McNeill remarked, in the memorable pamphlet he published at this time, "she has advanced her frontier in the west eight hundred and fifty miles towards Vienna, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, and Paris; she has approached four hundred and fifty miles nearer to Constantinople; she has possessed herself of the capital of Poland, and has advanced to within a few miles of the capital of Sweden; and the territories she has acquired during this period are greater in extent and importance than the whole empire she had in Europe before that time." Peter the Great, the founder of Russian greatness, was the first to contemplate the establishment of a great empire in the east. During his reign the old Russian boundary eastward was defined by the celebrated line, called the Orenburg and Siberia line, stretching from Orenburg on the Ural river up to the borders of China, a distance of 2,200 miles. South of this range down to the Jaxartes, or Syr, the steppes of the nomad race of Kirghis Cossacks extended 2,000 miles in length and 1,000 in breadth, through a region impassable except to well-appointed caravans, and at particular seasons of the year. It required a hundred years to bring these hordes in some measure into subordination to the imperial authority, and it was not till the year 1830 that the Russians in their progress southward took up their position on the Syr. On that river they have gradually established a chain of forts, extending from the estuary of the river in the lake Ural, to Fort Vernoe eastward along seven hundred miles. The truth of the assertion made by Sir Robert Peel in 1844, "that when civilization and barbarism come in contact the latter must inevitably give way," has been fully verified in the progress of Russian power in Asia. The same irresistible impulse which

Digitized by Google

has carried the English standard, in the course of a century, from the Bay of Bengal, over subverted thrones, through fifteen hundred miles of territory, up to Peshawur, has brought the Russians down from Orenburg to the Jaxartes and the Oxus, both of which must at no distant period become Russian rivers, navigated by Russian steamers, and subservient to Russian interests. Already are the resources of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokan, the three kingdoms of Toorkistan, within the grasp of Russia, and her influence must inevitably be extended to the Hindoo Koosh, which is evidently destined to be the snow-clad boundary of the two great European empires in Asia.

Influence of Russia in Persia, 1836.

Before the development of Russian power in the north along the line of the Jaxartes had been completed, an attempt was made by the ambition of her diplomatic agents to take advantage of the ascendency she had acquired at the court of Persia and push her influence in another direction, up to the banks of the Indus. At the beginning of the century the Russians wrested the province of Georgia from the crown of Persia, and although the political relations of the two powers were for many years as pacific as could be expected where the one was domineering, and the other impatient of control, there was a latent feeling of irritation among the Persians which only required a spark to kindle the flames of war. It was reported that the Russians had done violence to the religious feelings of the Georgian Mahomedans. The Persian mollahs, or priests, raised the cry of a religious war, and the Russians in the garrisons and outposts were indiscriminately massacred. Under the threat of forfeiting his seat in paradise, the king was constrained by the fanaticism of the priesthood to send his son Abbas Mirza with 40,000 men into the field to combat the Russians. The fourth article of the treaty of Teheran, concluded in 1814, pledged the British Government in case of a war between Persia and any European power to aid the Shah with a force, or to grant him an annual subsidy during its continuance. It was mainly

Digitized by Google

in reliance on this engagement that the Persians embarked with eagerness in this war with a superior power. But a strong pressure of male, and more especially of female, diplomacy in London was brought to bear on the British Ministry, and hints were conveyed that any attempt to carry out this article of the treaty would lead to a rupture with Russia. All assistance was therefore refused under the convenient pretext that Persia was the aggressor, though she had been goaded into the war by the constant encroachments of her imperious neighbour. The Persian army, though a portion of it had been disciplined by English officers, was completely routed, and the Shah was obliged to submit to the humiliation of ceding two of his finest provinces to Russia, and indemnifying her for the expenses of the war. The Persian court was driven to extremity by this pecuniary mulct when the English Ministry came to its relief with a large ready money payment on condition that the inconvenient article in the treaty of 1814 should be abrogated.

Persian expedition to Khorasan and Herat, 1834.

The Persians sought to indemnify themselves for these losses by the conquest of the province of Khorasan, lying to the east of their dominions, which they were enabled to accomplish in 1832 by the aid of English and Russian officers. The next year Mahomed Shah, the grandson of the reigning prince, proceeded on an expedition to Herat; but he had made little progress in the siege before he was obliged, to his great chagrin, to return to Teheran, in consequence of the death of his father. Futteh Ali, the old king who had welcomed Captain Malcolm in 1802, and had always been favourable to an alliance with England, died in the following year. Mahomed Shah, who now ascended the throne, evinced a strong disposition to fraternize with Russia, more especially as the result of the late war had inspired him with a lively dread of her power. Since the first mission of Captain Malcolm, the British Government had expended a sum of no less than ninety-three lacs of rupees in embassies and subsidies to Persia. British officers had been sent to discipline her armies, and her arsenals had been filled

Digitized by Google

with the munitions of war by British treasure, with the object of establishing a preponderant sway at the court which might serve as a bulwark of the British empire in India. The Ministry had now the mortification of seeing this expenditure and labour neutralized, and British influence completely overpowered by that of Russia. The expedition to Herat, which was the favourite project of the young and impetuous monarch, became the test of the strength of these rival influences at Teheran.

Negotiations regarding Herat, 1835.

Kamran, the ruler of Herat, had openly violated the treaties subsisting between him and Persia, and had, likewise, made repeated inroads into the territories of the Shah, and kidnapped his subjects to the number, as the Persians affirmed, of 12,000, and sold them into slavery. In the opinion of the British Minister, Mr.—now Sir John—McNeill, these atrocities fully justified the Persians in resorting to hostilities; but he did not fail to represent to the Ministry that, in the present state of the relations between Russia and Persia, the advance of the latter into Afghanistan, of which Herat was considered the gate, was tantamount to the progress of the former towards the Indus, and ought to be counteracted by the British Government to the fullest extent which the obligations of public faith would permit. He affirmed that the influence and intrigues of Russia would thus be extended, through the conquests of Persia, up to the threshold of India, the public mind in the north-west provinces unsettled, and the tranquillity of the British empire disturbed. Mr. McNeill used every argument to dissuade the Shah from the prosecution of the enterprise, which he affirmed would compromise him with the British Government, and advised him to seek a redress of grievances by an amicable arrangement with Herat. At the same time, he recommended Kamran to avoid the risks of a second invasion by making suitable concessions to the Persian monarch. A conference was accordingly held, but the Persian representative made the most arrogant demands, claiming the whole of

Digitized by Google

Afghanistan up to Ghuzni as Persian territory, and Herat as a Persian province. The attempt to reconcile differences proved abortive, but Mr. McNeill did not the less endeavour to dissuade the Shah from the expedition, while, on the other hand, the Russian minister, Count Simonich, encouraged him to persevere, and offered him every assistance. The question was then referred to the Ministry in London, and a remonstrance was addressed to the Russian authorities at St. Petersburg, who replied that the Count had exceeded his instructions, and that the Emperor entirely disapproved of the expedition. The Count was not recalled, and his proceedings at Teheran were so completely in unison with the national feeling in Russia, if not likewise with that of the public functionaries, that the Moscow Gazette threatened to dictate the next treaty with England in Calcutta.

The Herat expedition, 1837.

The Shah set out for Herat in the month of July, with 50,000 troops and fifty pieces of cannon, dwelling with delight on the facility with which his disciplined infantry and artillery would overturn the Sikhs, and pursue the course of Nadir Shah to Delhi. The expedition was regarded as the triumph of Russian over British influence, and created an extraordinary impression in Central Asia. Throughout India the sensation was greater than had been felt since the invasion of Zemaun Shah at the beginning of the century. The native princes again began to speculate on the downfall of the Company's supremacy. Threats of invasion were muttered in Nepal and in Burmah. The native journals fanned the excitement to such a degree as to bring in question the wisdom of having bestowed freedom on the press, but happily no attempt was made to bridle it. Inflammatory papers which were traced to Persian agency were diligently scattered through the country. The Mahomedans looked for the advent of a countless host of the faithful, backed, it was believed, by two hundred thousand Russians, to wrest the country from the hands of the Company. The country was agitated with the report of great movements in Central Asia,

Digitized by Google

the cradle of revolutions for eight centuries, and men in the remote districts of the Deccan began to bury their money and jewels in the earth. The fall of Herat under these circumstances would, in the opinion of Mr. McNeill, have inflicted a blow on the prestige of the Indian Government which would be felt throughout the east.

Lord Auckland's advisers, 1837.

At this juncture Lord Auckland left Calcutta and proceeded towards the sanitarium of Simla, with Mr. Macnaghten, as the public secretary in attendance on him, and Mr. John Colvin as his private secretary. The north-west provinces were at the time visited with a more severe famine than had been known since they came under British authority, and which was calculated to have swept away half a million of the inhabitants. The Governor-General's camp consisted, as usual, of more than 20,000 men, and its progress tended to aggravate the general distress. On reaching Cawnpore, Mr. Macnaghten advised Lord Auckland to return to Calcutta, and if the advice had been followed, the Government would probably have been spared the disasters of the Afghan war, but it was determined to push on to Simla. Mr. William Hay Macnaghten had been for several years a cavalry officer in the Madras army before he entered the Bengal civil service. In the college of Fort William he had carried away the highest prizes, and he was one of the most profound oriental scholars in India. After having risen to great distinction in the judicial branch of the service, he entered the political department during the administration of Lord W. Bentinck, who formed a high estimate of the soundness of his judgment and the sobriety of his opinions. Mr. Colvin, the private secretary, was a man of considerable abilities, and lofty bearing, with a spirit of greater resolution than his master, over whom he exerted a paramount influence. On these two officers, but more especially on Mr. Colvin, devolved the duty of giving advice to the Governor-General at this momentous crisis, when he was separated from the constitutional advice of his Council. The under-secretary, Mr. Henry Torrens, whose

Digitized by Google

influence in the Simla cabinet, was altogether secondary, was an accomplished scholar, a man of great parts and versatile genius, but too volatile to be a safe political guide. The home Government, seeing in every direction the indication of a restless and aggressive spirit, directed on the part of Russia and her political agents, against the security of the British empire in India, had instructed the Governor-General to adopt vigorous measures for its protection. Mr. McNeill, who had already sounded the note of alarm in his pamphlet on the progress of Russia in the east, which produced a profound sensation in England, advised Lord Auckland to meet the crisis by raising up the barrier of a friendly power in Afghanistan, and recommended that Dost Mahomed should be subsidized and strengthened.

Captain Burnes at Cabul, 1837.

It was at this period of fermentation that Captain Burnes made his appearance at the court of Cabul, to work out the policy of opening the Indus to commerce, but he found himself at once in the very vortex of political complications, and his character of mercantile agent was speedily merged into that of diplomatist. Native courts are accustomed to measure the esteem and respect in which they are held, and the importance of a political mission, by the character of the presents which accompany it, and the Afghans had a vivid remembrance of the magnificent gifts brought by Mr. Mountstewart Elphinstone thirty years before. Captain Burnes was escorted to the durbar by Akbar Khan, at the head of a fine body of Afghan cavalry, on the 20th September, and honoured with a splendid reception, but when he came to exhibit the presents with which he was charged, a pistol and a telescope for the Dost, and some pins and needles for the ladies of the zenana, he and his embassy sunk at once into contempt in the eyes of the court. The first glance at the state of affairs convinced him that Afghanistan was ready to throw herself into the arms of Persia, and he considered it fortunate that he should have arrived at the nick of time to counteract the hostile projects of the Persian court. The

Digitized by Google

brothers of Dost Mahomed at Candahar, partly from hatred of Kamran, the ruler of Herat, with whom they had a blood feud for the murder of their father, and partly from a dread of his aggressions, had made proposals for an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Shah of Persia. These overtures were heartily encouraged by the Russian minister, who did not fail to perceive that the extension of Persian influence in Afghanistan would essentially promote the views and interests of Russia. The Persian envoy who was sent to complete the negotiations arrived at Candahar as Captain Burnes entered Cabul, where he learnt that the Shah had readily responded to the advances made by Dost Mahomed after he had met with a repulse from Lord Auckland, and that an ambassador with robes and presents had arrived at Candahar.

Negotiations with Dost Mahomed, 1837.

In his intercourse with Captain Burnes, the Dost dwelt exclusively on the subject which had led him to open communications with the courts of Persia and Russia, the loss of Peshawur and the encroachments of the Sikhs. He was ready, he said, to break off all connection with Persia, and to dismiss the envoy with his presents from Candahar, if he were permitted to entertain any hope of assistance for the recovery of the province from the British Government. But Lord Auckland entertained a morbid dread of giving offence to Runjeet Sing, whom he termed our ancient and faithful ally, and was loth to entertain any proposal regarding Peshawur. Yet that province had always been a source of anxiety to him, and not only a burden on his treasury, but an object of insuperable aversion to his troops. Before Captain Burnes's mission to Cabul, he had offered to restore it to the Afghans, on condition of their paying tribute; but Dost Mahomed disdained the idea of a Mahomedan becoming tributary to an infidel. This feeling was, however, eventually overcome by his passionate desire to recover the province, and he at length assured Captain Burnes that if Runjeet Sing would restore it, he was ready to hold it as a fief of the Punjab, and to transmit the customary presents. There can be little doubt that if Lord Auckland had

Digitized by Google

boldly faced the question, and entrusted the solution of this difficulty to Captain Burnes at Cabul, and to Captain Wade at Loodiana, it would have been brought to an early and satisfactory issue. The overtures of Persia and Russia would in that case have been definitely rejected, and Dost Mahomed, secured as an ally, would have become an effectual barrier against any encroachments from the west. But, from first to last, there appears to have been a fatal infatuation in our Afghan policy, and the whole transaction stands forth in the annals of British India, as that in which it is difficult to discover a single step that was not marked by folly. Soon after his arrival at Cabul, Captain Burnes endeavoured to dissuade the Candahar chiefs from the Persian alliance, and threatened them with the severe displeasure of the British Government if they persisted in it. This communication produced a salutary result, and induced them to dismiss the Persian envoy without the usual ceremonies. But on farther reflection, they began to entertain an apprehension that the Shah would take vengeance on them for the rejection of the alliance, and endeavour to annex Candahar to his dominions, which, indeed, he had from the first fully intended to do. Captain Burnes therefore despatched an officer to Candahar in December, to assure them that if the province should be invaded by the king of Persia, he would proceed thither himself, and support them by every means in his power, even to the extent of paying their troops. Lord Auckland severely reprimanded Captain Burnes for having thus exceeded his instructions, and directed him to inform the chiefs of Candahar that he had held out expectations which his Government was not prepared to sanction. Yet the measure which Lord Auckland now reprobated was pronounced by the Ministry in England to be the wisest which could have been adopted. The Candahar rulers, finding that the engagements of the British envoy at Cabul were not to be depended on, immediately entered into a treaty with Persia, which was guaranteed by Count Simonich, who engaged to defend Candahar against an attack from whatever quarter it might come.

Digitized by Google

The Russian Envoy, 1837.

After the receipt of Lord Auckland's unfavourable reply in 1836, Dost Mahomed despatched an envoy to St. Petersburg to solicit the interposition of the Emperor. He alluded to the dissensions between his own tribe and the Suddozyes, and stated that the English were rather disposed to give their support to Shah Soojah. He expressed a hope that his imperial majesty would permit him to be received, like the Persians, under the protection of Russia, and would condescend to arrange matters in Afghanistan, and protect him from Sikh encroachment. Captain Vitkewich, an officer on the staff of the Governor-General of Orenburg, was sent to Cabul with presents of considerable value, and a reply from the Czar, the authenticity of which has been questioned, but never disproved. His credentials, like those of Captain Burnes, were ostensibly of a commercial character, but in both cases were doubtless intended to cover political negotiations. He arrived at Cabul on the 19th December, and the Dost immediately visited Captain Burnes, and assured him that he desired no connection except with the British Government, and was prepared to turn the Russian officer summarily out of Cabul; but Captain Burnes succeeded in dissuading him from this imprudent measure. In communicating to Lord Auckland the fact that a Russian envoy had arrived at Cabul with the most tempting offers to Dost Mahomed, Captain Burnes urged the necessity of immediate and decisive action, in this neck to neck race between Russia and England in Afghanistan. But Lord Auckland persisted in refusing the Dost any hope of his good offices with Runjeet Sing, and intimated that he must waive all claim to Peshawur, and remain content with any arrangement the Sikh ruler might think fit to make with Sultan Mahomed regarding it. The Dost replied that he bore no enmity to his brother, notwithstanding his incessant treachery and his rancorous hostility, but he could never consider himself secure at Cabul, if Sultan Mahomed held Peshawur. In subsequent interviews with Captain Burnes, he went so far as to say that his fears would be allayed if Peshawur were made

Digitized by Google

over conjointly to him and to his brother. Captain Burnes importuned Lord Auckland to give a favourable ear to these representations, stating, that while he himself had been in constant and friendly communication with the Dost, the Russian envoy had been kept aloof, and the Emperor's presents had been contemptuously left at Candahar, and that he himself entertained the fullest confidence in the sincerity of his declaration of attachment to the British alliance, so long as there remained any hope of securing it.

Lord Auckland's haughty communication, 1838.

This hope was effectually quenched by the letter which Lord Auckland was advised to address personally to the Dost in the month of February, in which the refusal of his request was wantonly embittered by the supercilious tone in which it was conveyed. He was told that Runjeet Sing, whom the Afghans regarded as the incarnation of evil, had from the generosity of his nature acceded to the wish of the Governor-General for the cessation of strife, if the Dost would engage to conduct himself with propriety; that it was British interference which had hitherto protected the Afghans from the continuance of the war which must have ended in their ruin; that the hopes he cherished, which could never be realized, must be abandoned; that he must seek a reconciliation with the Maharaja, who was the firm and ancient ally of the English, and that the establishment of peace would give him a degree of security in the territory actually under his government to which he had long been a stranger. The British Government would labour to secure this object, but only on condition that he abstained from forming any connection with other powers without their sanction. Every sentence in this scornful communication was calculated to kindle a flame of indignation in the Afghan nobles and chiefs, and Captain Burnes's mission became hopeless from the day it was delivered. In the last resort, Dost Mahomed addressed a friendly letter to the Governor-General imploring him in language bordering on humility "to remedy the grievances of

Digitized by Google

the Afghans and to give them a little encouragement and power." Lord Auckland and his Simla cabinet of secretaries were deaf to every representation. They demanded the largest concessions from Dost Mahomed and required him to reject the alluring offers which other powers were pressing on him, while they themselves offered him nothing in return but political sympathies, and their good offices to protect him from the further encroachments of Runjeet Sing in Afghanistan, when it was well known that the mere mention of the Khyber pass, as General Avitabile affirmed, gave his soldiers the cholic, and that Runjeet Sing had no more idea of marching to Cabul than to Pekin. Lord Auckland required him to break with Persia, with Russia, and with Turkistan, but would not engage to protect him from the hostility which he must inevitably have incurred thereby. After the Government had thus treated him with studied indignity, and addressed him as though he had been some petty dependent Indian raja, and extinguished every hope of a British alliance, it was no matter of surprise that he should have welcomed the Russian envoy, who was accordingly conducted through the streets with great parade, and received with distinction at the court. Captain Burnes continued to linger at Cabul for another month, and did not take his departure till the 26th of April. The Russian envoy promised everything which the Dost was most anxious to obtain, and immediately opened an official correspondence with Runjeet Sing, but met with no encouragement to visit Lahore. He then proceeded to Candahar and completed the treaty with the chiefs, which was soon after ratified by the Russian minister at the Persian court, though it contained stipulations hostile to the British Government, with whom Russia was at peace.

Resolution of Lord Auckland, 1838.

The object of the public authorities both in England and in India at this difficult conjuncture was the same as that which had led to the despatch of Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone's embassy in 1809, "to interpose a friendly power in Central Asia between us and any invading

Digitized by Google

power from the west." Mr. McNeill and Captain Wade, the political agent at Loodiana, though they differed on several points, concurred in recommending that this object should be pursued by strengthening the actual rulers of Cabul and Candahar, and binding them to British interests. Captain Burnes on his return from Cabul enquired why we could not act with Dost Mahomed. "He is" he said "a man of undoubted ability, and has at heart a high opinion of the British nation, and if half you would do for others were done for him, he would abandon Persia and Russia to-morrow;" but Lord Auckland and his advisers appear from the first to have regarded the Dost with feelings of mistrust as well as aversion. They were evidently chagrined that, instead of submitting with grateful humility to whatever terms they might think fit to dictate, he should be sitting at the gate of India, apparently debating whether he would accept their offers, or those of their opponents. They may also have considered it a point of national honour to secure a footing in Afghanistan by their own swords rather than by subsidizing the Dost, and they determined, therefore, to depose him. On the 12th May, 1838, Lord Auckland drew up an elaborate Minute in which he reviewed the whole question, and enumerated three courses as being open to us. The first was to confine our defensive operations to the line of the Indus and abandon Afghanistan to its fate, but this, he remarked, would be absolute defeat, and leave a free opening for Persian and Russian intrigue on our frontier. The second was to secure Afghanistan by granting succour to the Dost and to his brothers at Candahar, but this would be giving power, as he thought, to those who would probably employ the means placed at their disposal against our allies the Sikhs. The third alternative and that which Lord Auckland resolved to adopt was, to permit, or to encourage, the advance of Runjeet Sing's armies on Cabul, under control and restriction; and, as subsidiary to this movement, to organize an expedition, headed by Shah Soojah, to enable him to establish his authority in eastern Afghanistan,

Digitized by Google

and to aid him by contributions in money, and by the presence of an accredited agent, together with a sufficient body of officers to discipline and command his troops.

Mr. Macnaghten's mission to Lahore, 1838.

Mr. Macnaghten was despatched to Lahore to obtain the concurrence of Runjeet Sing in this project. His instructions, dated three days after the Minute, were drawn by Mr. Torrens in a very bombastic style; and embraced a far more extended and a more perilous scheme than that which was contemplated in the Governor-General's Minute—that while the Sikhs advanced cautiously on Cabul, a division of the British army should accompany Shah Soojah across the Indus, and occupy the town of Shikarpore, for a time. Mr. Macnaghten entered the Punjab on the 30th May, and was received with great cordiality by Runjeet Sing, then in the last year of his existence, who tottered through the whole length of the audience chamber to embrace him, and then hastened to inspect the trays of presents with a feeling of childish delight. When they met to discuss the object of the mission, Mr. Macnaghten asserted, with diplomatic assurance, that the failure of Captain Burnes's mission to Cabul arose from the unwillingness of the Ameer to break off negotiations with other powers. He then launched out into a transcendental panegyric of the resources of the British empire, and affirmed that 200,000 soldiers could at any time be brought into the field to resist an invasion from the east, west, north, and south. There was nothing, he said, of a palpable character to be apprehended from the movements of Persia and Russia, or the hostility of the Sirdars at Cabul, or Candahar, but as they must tend to unsettle the minds of men, it was desirable to concert measures to suppress all disturbing influences. He then alluded to the treaty which Runjeet Sing had entered into with Shah Soojah in 1833, and enquired whether it would be agreeable to his wishes that it should be revived, and that the British Government should become a party to it, assisting Shah Soojah with money and officers. "That," replied Run-

Digitized by Google

jeet, "would be adding sugar to milk." But he demanded that Shah Soojah should confirm his right to the territories he held beyond the Indus, and that, if he were required to renounce all claim to Sinde, he should receive one-half the sum which the Shah might succeed in extorting from the Ameers. He also hinted a wish to be put in possession of Jellalabad, but as he well knew that his own troops were not to be trusted in the passes, the request was evidently advanced to cover a demand for more money, and it was eventually arranged that the Shah should pay him an annual subsidy of two lacs of rupees. The treaty to which Runjeet Sing affixed his seal, was in fact a simple revival of the compact concluded five years before between him and Shah Soojah and to which the British Government now became a party, with the addition of four articles, none of which, however, created any obligation to send a British force across the Indus. Mr. Macnaghten then proceeded to Loodiana to obtain the concurrence of Shah Soojah in these arrangements, and, as he had everything to receive, every difficulty was speedily removed. It was clearly understood by both parties in the conference at Loodiana that the assistance to be given by the British Government was to be limited to the appointment of a representative at Cabul, and officers to discipline and command the Shah's army, and an advance of money to pay it; and he repeatedly expressed his fervent hope that the immediate operations for regaining his kingdom should be conducted by his own troops.

The Grand Expedition, 1838. Mr. Macnaghten returned with the tripartite treaty to Simla on the 17th of July, and found that during his absence there had been a further development of the expeditionary project. It was argued—and nothing could be more palpable—that unless the British Government engaged as principals in the expedition it must end in a disgraceful failure. It was therefore resolved to send a large British army across the Indus into the unexplored regions of Central Asia, and to plant it in the centre of Afghanistan. To reach that isolated position all convoys

Digitized by Google

of provisions and munitions of war were required to traverse the states of doubtful allies, and to thread long and dangerous mountain defiles, beset with wild and plundering tribes. This perilous expedition was undertaken by Lord Auckland without the concurrence of the Supreme Council, then sitting in Calcutta. The Whig Ministry did not, however, shrink from sharing the responsibility of it with their colleague in India. Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Control, when interrogated on the subject by a Committee of the House of Commons, said, "Alone I did it," which simply signified that he had authorized it without any reference to the Court of Directors. He affirmed that Lord Auckland was not to bear the blame of this measure; it was the policy of the home Government, and he might mention that his despatch stating his opinion of the course which ought to be taken to meet the exigency which had arisen, and that written by Lord Auckland informing him of the arrangements made for the expedition, crossed each other on the road. Sir John Hobhouse's communication has never been permitted to see the light and appears still to be considered a state secret, and it is therefore difficult to estimate its bearing on the movements of the expedition. But beyond the ministerial circle in Downing Street, and the secretaries at Simla, this preposterous enterprise was universally condemned as soon as it was announced. Mr. Elphinstone stated that, "if 27,000 men were sent up the Bolan pass to Candahar, and we could feed them, there was no doubt that we might take Cabul, and set up Shah Soojah; but it was hopeless to maintain him in a poor, cold, strong, and remote country, among a turbulent people like the Afghans." Lord William Bentinck considered the project an act of incredible folly. Lord Wellesley regarded this wild expedition, eight hundred miles from our frontier and our resources, into one of the most difficult countries in the world, a land of rocks and deserts, of sands and ice and snow, as an act of infatuation. The Duke affirmed with prophetic sagacity that the consequence of once crossing the Indus to settle a

Digitized by Google

government in Afghanistan would be a perennial march into that country.

Character of the Afghan expedition, 1838.

With the exception of the brief campaign of a week in Coorg, the Company had enjoyed the unexampled blessing of repose for twelve years; but India now resounded with the din of preparation for a war in Central Asia, hundreds of miles beyond the Indus, which was not even yet our geographical boundary. The expedition was not more remarkable for the region into which it was to be launched, than for the people against whom it was to be directed. For five centuries the barren mountains of Afghanistan had poured down a continued stream of needy adventurers on the rich plains of India, who had established powerful principalities and kingdoms in every part of the continent from Rohilcund at the foot of the Himalaya to the banks of the Kistna in the Deccan. They had founded two imperial dynasties at Delhi, and their aristocracy had taken root in India, which was dotted with Afghan colonies in every direction. The tables were now to be turned upon them, and the new masters of India were about to roll back the tide of invasion, and assail them in their own mountain fastnesses. The general feeling of the European community in India, both lay and official, inclined rather to the able and gallant Dost Mahomed, than to the imbecile Shah Soojah, who had twice been ignominiously expelled from the country he was about to enter for the third time with the aid of British troops. There was also a strong English feeling against the deposition of the Dost, who was considered the victim of an unjust policy; but there was, on the other hand, the charm of romance associated with an expedition to the scenes of Mahomedan glory, renowned by the exploits of Mahmood and Jenghis Khan, of Timur and Nadir Shah.

Lord Auckland's manifesto, Oct. 1st, 1838.

On the 1st October Lord Auckland issued a declaration from Simla, setting forth the grounds of the expedition. It is one of the most remarkable state papers in the records of British India, whether con-

Digitized by Google

sidered with reference to its glaring misstatements, the sophistry of its arguments, or the audacity of its assertions. It affirmed that the army of Dost Mahomed had made a sudden and unprovoked attack on our ancient ally, Runjeet Sing, whereas it was Runjeet Sing who had made repeated and unprovoked attacks on the Dost. It stated that he had urged the most unreasonable pretensions with regard to his misunderstanding with the Sikhs, whereas the only proposition he had made was one which Runjeet Sing himself would have been readily inclined to accept. It accused the Afghan ruler of having avowed schemes of aggrandizement and ambition injurious to the peace and security of the frontiers of India, and of having openly threatened, in furtherance of those schemes, to call in every foreign aid he could command, and ultimately given his undisguised support to the designs of the King of Persia on Afghanistan; but it withheld the important fact that he had accepted the Persian alliance only after the most strenuous efforts had been made for five months without success to obtain a British alliance, and that he was driven into the arms of Persia, against his own will, solely by the perversity of the Indian Government. It affirmed that the orders for the assemblage of a British force were issued in concurrence with the Supreme Council, whereas the Council, when required to place the manifesto on the public records, remonstrated against the consummation of a policy of such grave importance without their ever having had an opportunity of stating their opinions regarding it. The general object of the expedition was described to be to secure on our western frontier an ally who was interested in resisting aggression, in the place of chiefs ranging themselves in subservience to a hostile power; the immediate object was "to succour the besieged garrison of Herat, who had behaved with a gallantry and fortitude worthy of the justice of their cause." To that memorable siege we now turn.

Siege of Herat for five months.

The territory of Herat is the only route by which a large and fully equipped army can

Digitized by Google

advance towards India from the north-west, and the city is therefore considered the gate of Afghanistan. So exuberant is the fertility of the plain in which it is situated that it is usually styled the granary of Central Asia. All the materials for the organization of an army and the formation of depôts are to be found in the neighbourhood in great abundance. Its mines furnish lead, iron, and sulphur, the surface of the country is covered with saltpetre, and the woods afford abundance of charcoal. The population is hardy and docile. The king, Shah Kamran, was one of the worst specimens of an oriental voluptuary and despot. His minister, Yar Mahomed, though not devoid of courage and abilities, was justly described by Lieutenant Pottinger as "the greatest scoundrel in Central Asia." The government was an execrable tyranny, and derived its chief support from the sale of the wretched beings who had been kidnapped and reduced to slavery. The King of Persia sat down before the city on the 23rd November, 1837. The fortifications were crumbling to pieces, and it might have been carried by a vigorous and scientific assault on the first day. The practice of the Persian artillery which had been trained by British officers was superb, but the ignorance of the Persian officers in charge of it completely neutralized its value. A few days before the commencement of the siege, Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger, a young officer of the Bombay Artillery, who had been sent by his uncle, Colonel Pottinger, the Resident in Cutch, to make researches in Central Asia, entered the city in the garb of a *syud*—a descendant of the Prophet—and took up his residence at the caravansary in common with its other inmates. In the true spirit of English adventure, he resolved to remain and take a share in the approaching struggle, though not also without the hope of promoting the interests of his country in the defence of the city. His services were offered to the king and his minister and readily accepted, and the natural ascendency of genius speedily gave him the chief direction of operations. The garrison was animated by a spirit of great resolution and

Digitized by Google

perseverance, and under his guidance succeeded in baffling for five months the repeated assaults of the Persians, though aided by a regiment of Russians, who were styled deserters to save appearances. Mr. McNeill, the British minister at the Persian court, joined the royal encampment on the 6th April, to the great annoyance of the Shah, who considered that his presence would not fail to give encouragement to the Heratees. He was received, however, with due ceremony, and lost no time in making an effort to reconcile the belligerents. He found both parties inclined to accept his mediation. The Shah was disheartened by the protraction and the expense of the siege, and authorized him to offer whatever terms he might consider reasonable, and Kamran was equally prepared to accede to any conditions he might recommend. He proceeded to the city and opened negotiations with every prospect of a favourable issue; but the Russian minister at Teheran followed him in all haste, and, having met with an accident, drove in his carriage from Teheran to Herat and reached the camp during Mr. McNeill's absence. His arrival completely changed the aspect of affairs. He urged the continuance of the siege, advanced funds for the Persian army, and engaged, if Herat were captured, to remit the whole of the instalments still due by Persia to Russia. Mr. McNeill met with a cold reception on his return from the city, and the Shah not only rejected the amicable arrangement he had made, but announced his resolution to renew the assault. The redress Mr. McNeill continued to demand for a wanton outrage committed on one of his messengers some months before, who had been stripped naked and scourged, was persistently refused, and he himself was treated with great contumely. The influence of England was completely prostrated, and he found it necessary to break off all diplomatic relations with the Shah and retire to the Turkish frontier.

Battle of the 24th June—the siege raised, 1838.

The siege was prosecuted with new vigour. The 24th June was fixed for a general assault, and it afforded a fresh opportunity for the display of Lieutenant

Digitized by Google

Pottinger's courage and genius. Count Simonich personally undertook the direction of the attack, and Russian engineers superintended the operations. The city was attacked at five points, but the assailants were repulsed from four of them. At the fifth, however, they succeeded in making a practicable breach, but were thrice repelled by the gallantry of the Heratees. Their courage began at length to droop, and they recoiled from the onslaught of the enemy. Yar Mahomed, with all his bravery, was paralyzed by the energy of the Persians and seated himself in despair at a distance from the scene of action. The fate of Herat trembled in the balance, and the city was on the point of being lost, when it was saved by the indomitable spirit of Lieutenant Pottinger He went up to Yar Mahomed, conjured him, threatened him, reviled him, and at length, seizing him by the arm, dragged him to the breach, where he fell like a madman on his own troops as they drew back from the weapons of the Persians. The effect was magical; they rushed forward with infuriated zeal; the Persians were seized with a panic, when on the point of gaining their object, and fled in dismay to their camp, with the loss of more than 1,700 men, among whom was the Russian General Berowski. Herat was saved and the siege was turned into a blockade, during which the inhabitants suffered the extremity of wretchedness from the scarcity of provisions, and the unabated extortions of Yar Mahomed. The Persian army was likewise suffering from want of food. The Shah had lost many thousand men in the various conflicts, and a still larger number from desertion; his communications with Persia, from which he drew his supplies, were interrupted by the increasing boldness of the marauding tribes on the route, and he only wanted a decent pretext for raising the siege. Meanwhile, two steamers were sent by the Government of India with 500 sepoys to occupy the island of Karrack in the Persian Gulf, a description of which has been given in a former chapter. The force was too insignificant for any influential effort, but its strength was magnified by rumour, and in the camp before

Digitized by Google

Herat it was confidently announced that a large British fleet had destroyed the ports on the coast, and that a British army was marching on Shiraz. Mr. McNeill availed himself of the consternation created by this expedition, and deputed Colonel Stoddart to the Persian camp with a peremptory message to the Shah. He was instructed to state that the occupation of Herat, or of any part of Afghanistan, would be considered an act of hostility to England, that a British armament had already arrived in the Persian gulf, and that if the Shah desired to avert the measures which the British Government would adopt to vindicate its honour, he must immediately retire from the city. The king received Colonel Stoddart with cordiality, and at the first interview said, "The fact is, if I do not leave Herat, there will be war." "There is war," replied the Colonel, "everything depends on your Majesty's answer. God preserve your Majesty." Two days after, he was again in the royal presence, when the king informed him that he had made up his mind to consent to all the demands made by the British Government, and that he gave up the siege simply from his desire to maintain its friendship. He broke up his encampment on the 9th September and returned to Persia, having lost no small portion of his army and a large amount of treasure, besides incurring the disgrace of failure in an enterprise which had been the talk of Central Asia for ten months. The memorable defence of Herat against 40,000 Persian troops, aided by the skill of Russian engineers, stands side by side with the defence of Arcot by Clive, and reflects equal credit on the Anglo-Saxon youth by whose sole energy and genius it was rendered successful, though he had never seen service, and had no knowledge of the art of war except that which he had derived from study.

Persistence in the expedition to Cabul, 1838.

The grand projects of Persia which had for two years agitated the minds of men from the Caspian sea to the banks of the Ganges were quenched in the trenches of Herat. The dangers which were supposed to menace the British empire in India from the ambition of Persia and the

Digitized by Google

intrigues of Russian agents, were at once dispelled. The hostility of the rulers of Cabul and Candahar had ceased to have any political importance, and it was naturally expected that under this new aspect of circumstances the expedition would be relinquished. But, a large army had been assembled, and all the preparations for a grand enterprise completed, and it required more decision of character than the Governor-General possessed to resist the importunities, and to disappoint the expectations, of the ardent spirits around him. Accordingly, on the 8th November he announced in Orders that while the relinquishment of the siege of Herat was a just cause of congratulation, he should "still continue to prosecute with vigour the measures which had been announced with a view to the substitution of a friendly for a hostile power in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan, and to the establishment of a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression on our north-west frontier." This resolution to persevere in the expedition has justly been considered more obnoxious to censure than even the original design. The Governor-General endeavoured to justify it by affirming that it was required of us "alike in observation of the treaties entered into with Runjeet Sing and Shah Soojah, as by paramount considerations of defensive policy." But there was no allusion whatever in the tripartite treaty to the despatch of a British army across the Indus, and the Shah was particularly anxious to avoid the appearance of being carried to Cabul on the shoulders of infidels, which he considered would be detrimental in the highest degree to his popularity and his interests. He wanted British gold, not British bayonets, and it is an open question whether "the paramount considerations of defensive policy" would not have been more effectually promoted had he advanced through the country with his own army, and with a liberal supply of money, to buy up the mercenary chiefs.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LORD AUCKLAND'S ADMINISTRATION—THE AFGHAN EXPEDITION, 1838–1842.

Meeting with Runjeet Sing—The march, 1838.

THE army of the Indus, as it was designated, assembled at Ferozepore on the banks of the Sutlege towards the end of November. Before it proceeded on its route there was a grand meeting between Lord Auckland and the lion of the Punjab, then tottering on the brink of the grave; but he still exhibited in his countenance his habitual calmness of design, and his single eye was still lighted up with the fire of enterprise. The assembly, which was second in magnificence only to that of Roopur, was diversified by showy pageants, gay doings, and feats of mimic war. As the army was no longer bound for Herat its strength was reduced by one half, and the Commander-in-chief, Sir Henry Fane, who had consented to take the command in person when it was destined to march into Central Asia and baffle the designs of Russia, declined to head a diminished force simply to seat Shah Soojah on the throne of a better man. The Bengal column started from Ferozepore on the 10th of December, under the command of Sir Willoughby Cotton, with about 9,500 men of all arms, 30,000 camels, and 38,000 camp followers. The force raised for the immediate service of the Shah, which was designated his army, though commanded by Company's officers, and paid from the Company's treasury, consisted of about 6,000 men. The Bombay troops under the command of Sir John Keane amounted to 5,600, making a total of 21,000 soldiers. The political charge of the enterprise was entrusted to Mr. Macnaghten, with whom it originated, and he was officially styled the Envoy and Minister at the court of Shah Soojah, the Shah being the puppet, and Mr. Macnaghten the

Digitized by Google

king. The most direct route to Cabul from the banks of the Sutlege lay through the Punjab, a distance of about five hundred miles, but "our ancient and faithful ally" refused to grant a passage through his dominions to a body of 50,000 men, and it became necessary to take a circuitous route of a thousand miles down the Indus to Bukkur, and thence northward up to Candahar and Cabul.

Treatment of Sinde, 1839.

There was likewise another reason for adopting this devious course in the determination which was formed to exact a heavy contribution from the Ameers of Sinde. The conduct of the British Government on this occasion has been the subject of much controversy. On the one hand, it is asserted that the counsellors of Lord Auckland, haunted by the Russophobia which had given birth to the expedition—though the Russians had retired with the Persians from Herat, and were nowhere in Central Asia—seemed to consider that in their efforts to provide for the safety of the British empire in India, they were at liberty to suspend every consideration of justice, and that they imposed an iniquitous treaty on the Ameers. On the other hand, Captain Eastwick, who assisted in negotiating the treaty, considered it an indispensable measure of self-defence, forced on us by the machinations of the Ameers. They had plundered our stores of grain and taken every step, short of open hostilities, to obstruct the operations of the British Government. They had treated the British representative with gross indignity, and even menaced him with assassination; and, with a full knowledge of the hostile attitude the King of Persia had assumed towards us, threatened to form an alliance with him, and received an envoy from his court in their capital. In the treaty concluded with them in 1832 it was stipulated that no military stores should be transported through the province by land or by water, but the Bengal column marched through northern Sinde, and Sir John Keane, who had landed with the Bombay force at Kurrachee, was moving up from the south. Colonel Pottinger was instructed by the Governor-General to

Digitized by Google

inform them that "the article of the treaty which prohibits the using of the Indus for the conveyance of military stores must necessarily be suspended during the course of these operations; and that at this important crisis not only those who have shown a disposition to favour our adversaries, but those who display an unwillingness to help us, in the just and necessary undertaking in which we are engaged, must be displaced, and give way to others on whose friendship and co-operation we may be able implicitly to rely." The province of Sinde was formerly a dependency of the Dooranee empire, and had paid tribute whenever the rulers of Cabul were strong enough to enforce it. No tribute had been transmitted for forty years, and the Ameers were virtually independent. They were now required to pay up the arrears of revenue which was assumed at twenty-five lacs of rupees to a ruler who had been an exile from the throne of Cabul for thirty years. But when Colonel Pottinger presented this demand, he was confounded by the production of two releases from all further claims of every description which the Shah had written in two Korans, and signed and sealed, when he had prevailed on them to pay him three lacs of rupees in 1833. The Ameers said they were confident the Governor-General did not intend to make them pay over again for what they had already bought, but he was of opinion that it was not incumbent on him to enter into any formal investigation of this plea, and Mr. Macnaghten remarked that rather than allow the grand enterprise of restoring Shah Soojah to be postponed by any opposition from the Ameers, it would be better to let loose 20,000 of Runjeet Sing's troops upon their capital. It was likewise determined to impose a subsidiary force on them for which they were to provide three lacs of rupees a-year. The Ameers naturally demurred to these exactions, but Colonel Pottinger was desired to inform them that "neither the ready power to crush and annihilate them, nor the will to call it into action, were wanting, if it appeared requisite, however remotely, for the safety or the integrity of

Digitized by Google

the Anglo-Indian empire or frontier." To coerce them into submission, Sir John Keane marched with the Bombay army up to the neighbourhood of the capital, and it was resolved to strengthen the arguments of the negotiators by sending down the Bengal column to join him. The order to march was received with enthusiasm, for the expedition held out the prospect of military distinction and still more of a rich haul of prize money in a city which was reputed to contain eight crores of rupees. Awed by the presence of a British force, the Ameers yielded to necessity, signed the subsidiary treaty and paid up the first instalment of the demand. The Bengal troops retraced their steps with a feeling of bitter disappointment to Bukkur; and the sepoys, notwithstanding their superstitious objection to crossing the Indus, passed over without any hesitation, and for the first time erected the flag of England on the opposite bank.

Advance of the Army, 1839. The disasters of the force began as soon as it was across the Indus. The mortality among the draft cattle, on which the subsistence of the army depended, became portentous, and it was deemed advisable for Sir Willoughby Cotton to push on at once with the Bengal column through the sandy desert of Cutch Gundava, a hundred and forty miles in extent. Lord Auckland's secretaries had assured the officers of the army that the march to Cabul would be a military promenade, and the assertion was now to be exemplified. As this arid waste furnished little water and no pasturage, the camels died by hundreds, and the Belochee freebooters, who were in fact the only produce of the soil, hovered round the camp and never lost an opportunity of pillaging it. After a march of sixteen days the army reached Dadur at the mouth of the Bolan pass, the southern entrance into Afghanistan, with provisions on the beasts of burden that had survived sufficient only for a single month. The troops were six days defiling through this terrific gorge. There was no opposition from the mountaineers, but the flint stones lamed the camels, and the want of pasture and fatigue disabled the artillery

Digitized by Google

horses; the mountain paths were strewed with abandoned tents, equipage and stores, and the little stream which flowed at the bottom of the ravine, was tainted with the carcases of animals. Emerging from this pass the troops entered the beautiful valley of Shawl, but though it was covered with vineyards and orchards, it could only furnish food for the army for a few days. No small portion of the stock of provisions had been lost with the cattle in the Bolan pass, and starvation stared the army in the face. Captain Burnes was sent back to Khelat to endeavour to conclude a treaty with Mehrab Khan, the independent ruler of Belochistan, with the object of providing for the immediate wants of the force, and securing the passage of future supplies through the pass. For this service the chief was offered a subsidy of a lac and a half of rupees a-year; but it was beyond his power to afford the relief which the pressing necessities of the army required. His territory was by no means fertile; the harvest of the preceding year had been deficient; the British troops and the swarm of camp followers had given the growing crops to their cattle, and wantonly wasted the water on which the fields depended for irrigation, and the Belochees themselves were living on herbs and grass. Mehrab Khan informed Captain Burnes that he had received the most tempting overtures from the Persians and Russians, but had determined faithfully to see the British army through the pass. His conduct was deserving of all praise; and it was owing entirely to his active agency, that the troops were enabled to traverse that fearful defile, when a word from him might have brought the expedition to a dead lock, and an unhappy termination.

Arrival at Candahar, 1839.

On the 6th April, Shah Soojah's force, with the Envoy and the Bombay army reached Quettah, the largest town in the district of Shawl, where Sir Willoughby Cotton was already encamped, and Sir John Keane assumed the command of the whole expedition. The troops were half mutinous for want of food; the loaf of the European soldier was diminished in weight, the native troops were reduced to a

Digitized by Google

pound of flour a-day, and the camp followers to half that quantity. More than twenty thousand camels had perished, and it was necessary to push forward with all speed to Candahar. In the intervening space lay the Kojuck pass, scarcely less terrific than the Bolan, though not of the same extent. The batteries and the field pieces had to be dragged up and lowered down its appalling precipices by the European soldiers, pressed by hunger, parched with thirst, and consumed by incessant fatigue. Such was the military promenade to Cabul. As the Shah approached Candahar, the Barukzye princes, betrayed by their chiefs and followers, whom British gold had been employed to corrupt, fled to the west, and he entered the city without opposition on the 25th April. Some of the inhabitants shouted welcome, others strewed flowers in his path, and the curiosity of the people gave such an appearance of enthusiasm to his progress, that the sanguine Envoy assured Lord Auckland that he had been received with feelings bordering on adoration. But curiosity soon subsided, and when, a fortnight after, a gorgeous ceremonial was got up in the plain for his installation, which was celebrated by a salute of a hundred and one guns, not a hundred of the citizens were present, and the acclamations were confined to his own retainers.

Ghuzni, 1839. The army, still on reduced rations, was obliged to remain inactive in Candahar for ten weeks till the crops had ripened, and it was unable to resume its march before the 27th June. Two hundred and thirty miles distant from Candahar, and ninety from Cabul, lay the great fortress of Ghuzni, from which Mahmood had issued more than eight hundred years before to plant the standard of the crescent on the plains of India. It was deemed absolutely impregnable, and regarded as the pride of Afghanistan. Hyder Khan had been sent by his father, Dost Mahomed, to garrison it with 3,000 men, and he had taken advantage of the detention of the army at Candahar to strengthen the fortifications and to provision the fort for six months. It was found to be strong both by nature and by

Digitized by Google

art. The parapet which rose sixty or seventy feet above the plain, and the wet ditch, presented insurmountable obstacles to an attack by mining or escalade. Sir John Keane had listened to the voice of those who asserted that it was a place of no strength, and consequently left behind him the battering train which had been dragged with infinite labour through the Bolan and Kojuck passes. To attempt to breach the walls with the puny six and nine pounders which accompanied his force was idle, and there was every prospect of the total collapse of the expedition. A nephew of Dost Mahomed, however, was induced by the offer of a large bribe to desert his countrymen and turn traitor, and from him the engineers obtained an accurate description of the condition and character of the defences. All the gates had been built up with the exception of one, and Captain Thomson, the chief engineer, assured Sir John Keane that the only mode of attack which presented any chance of success was that of blowing it up, and then rushing into the fortress. Nine hundred pounds of powder were accordingly packed in bags under his direction and conveyed in silence and darkness to the gate. Fortunately, the night was gloomy and tempestuous, and the attention of the garrison was drawn off by a demonstration from the light batteries in other directions. The powder exploded; the massive barricade was shivered to pieces, and heavy masses of masonry and beams came toppling down in great confusion. Col. Dennie of the 13th Light Infantry rushed in with the storming party over the débris; the enemy, on hearing the explosion, hastened to the breach, and for some time there was a mortal struggle, but three hearty cheers, while it was yet dark, announced to the General, who was watching the result from a neighbouring height with deep anxiety, that the fortress was in our hands. At dawn of day, the British ensign was planted on the proud citadel of Ghuzni by Ensign Frere. This exploit cost the army a hundred and eighty in killed and wounded, of whom eighteen were officers; and it was the only military operation between Ferozepore and Cabul. A day or two after, a body

Digitized by Google

of *ghazees*, or Mahomedan fanatics, endeavoured to enter Shah Soojah's encampment in the hope of assassinating him, but were repulsed and pursued by Captain Outram, who captured their holy standard together with about fifty prisoners. When conducted into the presence of the Shah, they gloried in their attempt and reviled him to his face for having brought the infidels into the country, while one more ferocious than the rest stabbed one of his attendants. He immediately ordered the whole number to be executed, and they were deliberately hacked to pieces in cold blood outside his tents.

Arrival at Cabul, 1839.

The fate of Ghuzni opened up the road to Cabul, and filled Dost Mahomed with consternation. While the army under Sir John Keane was advancing towards the capital, another army under Prince Timur, the son of the Shah, and Colonel Wade was approaching it from the eastward by way of Jellalabad. Distracted by this double peril, the Dost called his officers together, and with the Koran in his hands implored them to make one bold stand like brave men and true believers. "You have eaten my salt," he said, "these thirteen years; grant me but one request in return. Stand by the brother of Futteh Khan while he executes one last charge against these Feringee dogs: in that onset he will fall; then make your own terms with Shah Soojah." But there was neither fidelity nor spirit left in them, and Dost Mahomed, finding the struggle hopeless, parked his guns at Urgundeh, in the vicinity of Cabul, and turned with a handful of followers to the regions of the Hindoo Koosh. As soon as the intelligence of his flight reached the army, it was resolved to follow him without a moment's delay. Captain Outram and nine other officers, animated with a lofty spirit of adventure, started in pursuit of him, with a small body of cavalry and several hundred Afghan horse commanded by Hajee Khan Kaukur. For six days they gave neither Dost Mahomed nor themselves any rest, night or day, and would in all probability have eventually overtaken him, but for the treachery of the Afghan Hajee. He had deserted the Dost for

Digitized by Google

the Candahar rulers, and then deserted them for Shah Soojah on the receipt of a large bribe, and now determined to abandon the cause of the Shah on the first opportunity. He consented to accompany the expedition only that he might defeat its object. He pretended illness, and always contrived to remain a march or two behind; he threw impediments in the way of every movement, and so effectually delayed the pursuit, that on reaching Bameean the Dost was found to have gained a start of thirty miles and passed beyond the confines of Afghanistan. The old traitor was sent to Hindostan, and passed many years in durance at Chunar. This enterprise was in keeping with Captain Outram's character, but it was more remarkable for its chivalry than its prudence. The treachery of the Hajee, which prevented the encounter of the parties, was, after all, a fortunate circumstance, since he and his Afghan horse would not have failed to join the Dost in attacking the feeble and jaded party of officers, in which case not one of whom would have escaped to tell the tale. On the 7th August, 1839, Shah Soojah, still resplendent with jewels, though without the Koh-i-noor, was conducted with martial pomp through the city of Cabul to the Bala Hissar, but there was no popular enthusiasm, and the procession resembled a funeral. The citizens came to their thresholds to gaze, not so much on the exiled and restored king, as on the cavalcade of infidels parading their streets, upon whom they did not fail to pour the most hearty maledictions.

Colonel Wade and Timur, 1838.

Three weeks later, the Shah was joined by his son Timur, who advanced on the direct line from Peshawur to Cabul in company with a Sikh contingent. He was totally destitute of character or spirit, and the entire responsibility of the expedition devolved on Colonel Wade, the able and experienced political agent at Loodiana. The prince's army, composed of a very miscellaneous assortment of about 4,000 recruits, but paid by the Company, reached Peshawur on the 20th March. A month after, the Raja Golab Sing, and Runjeet Sing's grandson, Nao Nihal

Digitized by Google

Sing, joined the camp with about 6,000 Sikh soldiers. A march through the Khyber pass to unknown dangers was equally unpalatable to both men and commanders, and it was not difficult to discover pretexts for delay. Insubordination is the normal condition of all Indian armies, even under their own princes, and the Sikh army at Peshawur was no exception to the general rule. Soon after its arrival one regiment turned out the colonel and the officers, shotted the guns and calmly awaited the progress of events. This mutiny was no sooner hushed up, than another broke out in the Goorkha corps, which struck its tents, and marched out of the camp with drums beating and colours flying to Peshawur. There the men took up a position a little distance from the fort, and were permitted to remain in a state of open revolt while a report of their conduct was sent on to Lahore. After four months had been wasted at Peshawur through these and other impediments, the expedition entered the Khyber on the 20th July. The Afredies were prepared to resist its progress with vigour, but Colonel Wade defeated their project by crowning the heights and turning their flank, a manœuvre by which these defiles were probably for the first time opened by the use of steel and not of gold. Dost Mahomed had sent the ablest of his sons, Akbar Khan, to oppose the progress of this force, but he was recalled to the defence of the capital as Sir John Keane advanced from the south, and Colonel Wade, after having mastered the Khyber, reached Cabul without difficulty.

Retention of the force in Afghanistan, 1839.

The object of the expedition had now been attained by the substitution of a friendly for a hostile power in Afghanistan, and the period had arrived, in accordance with Lord Auckland's manifesto, for the withdrawal of the British troops. It was evident, however, that there was no national feeling of attachment to the throne of the Shah, and that without the continued support of British bayonets it must eventually totter and fall. This truth had dawned on Mr. Macnaghten on his reaching Candahar, when

Digitized by Google

he wrote to the Governor-General that we must be prepared to look on Afghanistan for some years as an out-post yielding nothing, but requiring much expenditure to keep it in repair. Lord Auckland was equally convinced of the fact, and on the 20th August recorded his opinion that to leave the Shah without the support of a British army would be followed by his expulsion, and ensure a palpable failure of our plans, which would reflect disgrace on Government and become a source of danger. Our difficulties, as the Duke of Wellington had predicted, began as soon as our military success was complete. They commenced with the occupation of Cabul on the 2nd August, 1839, and they culminated on the 2nd November, 1841, in the insurrection which annihilated the army. To support the authority of the Shah it was determined to leave a body of about 10,000 troops to garrison Cabul, Jellalabad, Ghuzni, Candahar, and other places. General Willshire who commanded the Bombay force was directed on his way back to inflict a signal retribution on Mehrab Khan, the ruler of Belochistan, for having withheld supplies from the army on its march, and neglected to restrain the Belochee freebooters, in violation of the treaty which Captain Burnes had forced on him. In both cases he set up a valid plea of inability, and it is impossible to exonerate the proceedings which were pursued against him from the charge of vindictiveness and injustice. Khelat was found to be a very strong fortification, and the Belochees fought valiantly for their chief and their country. After the gates had been demolished by cannon, they continued to dispute every inch of ground, and Mehrab Khan fell with eight of his principal officers gallantly fighting in its defence. A relation was placed on the vacant throne and three of the most productive districts were annexed to the dominions of Shah Soojah, a most ungrateful return for the hospitable reception which Mehrab Khan had given to that monarch when he was obliged to fly from Afghanistan in 1833.

Capture of Khelat, Oct. 15, 1839.

Digitized by Google

Honours, 1840.

The expedition was as fertile in honours as it was barren in military achievements. It was a measure of ministerial policy, condemned by the general voice of society, in England and in India, and it was considered politic to make the most of the success which at first attended it. Lord Auckland was created an earl, and Sir John Keane, who had done nothing but leave his battering train behind him when he ought to have brought it on to Ghuzni, a baron with a pension of £2,000 a-year for two lives. Mr. Macnaghten, Colonel Pottinger, and General Willshire were made baronets, and Colonel Wade a knight; but Captain Thomson, whose exertions at Ghuzni saved the campaign from an ignominious failure received only a brevet-majority and the lowest order of the Bath, and at once retired from the service. The Shah was, moreover, advised to solicit permission of "his sister the Queen of England," to institute an order of knighthood, and the officers who had borne him on their shoulders to the throne were decorated with the evanescent "order of the Dooranee empire."

Death of Runjeet Sing, 1839.

Runjeet Sing died as the expedition was leaving Candahar, on the 27th June, 1839, at the age of fifty-seven, the victim of the excesses in which he had long been accustomed to indulge. The last attack before that which terminated his life deprived him of the use of speech, but his active mind was as eager as ever in public affairs. He pointed with his finger to the quarter from which he desired information, heard the reports read, and dictated his orders by signs to his faithful secretary. He possessed the same grand creative genius as Sevajee and Hyder Ali, though like them he was unable either to read or write. It was his extraordinary talent alone which reared the edifice of Sikh greatness, and if he had not been hemmed in by the irresistible power of the Company, he would undoubtedly have established a new and magnificent empire in Hindostan. He succeeded to the leadership of his tribe at the early age of seventeen, when the Punjab was distracted by the conflicts of its various indepen-

Digitized by Google

dent chieftains. He left it a compact and powerful kingdom, strengthened by the annexation of some of the richest provinces of the Dooranee empire. The military array of the country at the beginning of his career consisted only of a body of matchlock horsemen, who, though as renowned in India as the Mahratta or Mysore horse, were not adapted for any regular and extensive system of warfare. By indefatigable exertions, by the adoption of every improvement he could hear of, and by incessant and successful expeditions, he succeeded in creating an army 80,000 strong, with 300 pieces of cannon, superior in discipline, valour, and equipment to any force which had ever been seen in India under native colours. His annual revenue was gradually augmented till it reached two crores of rupees. He exhibited to an extraordinary degree the oriental passion for hoarding, and considered it a sacred duty to allow no day to pass without adding a sum, greater or less, to his accumulations. It is related that when he sometimes sat silent and moody at his evening durbar, and the courtiers enquired the cause of his depression, he replied, "it is near sunset and not a rupee has been sent to the *mootee mundeer*, or the treasury, to-day." Twenty voices exclaimed with joined hands, "Maharaj, my money is yours," and he immediately required them to verify the assertion by affixing their signature to a note of hand, which they were punctually obliged to honour the next day. The sum which he was enabled to amass exceeded twelve crores of rupees, of which he is said to have directed that forty lacs should be distributed in charity after his death. He bequeathed the celebrated Koh-i-noor which now adorns the diadem of England to the shrine of Juggunnath, and he left the crown to his imbecile son, Kurruck Sing, but the real power of the state was shared between his grandson, Nao Nihal Sing, an impetuous youth of eighteen, and Dhyan Sing, one of the crafty and ambitious Jummoo brothers, who contrived to appropriate the office of minister to bimself. Runjeet Sing was the only man in his court friendly to the British alliance. During the expe-

Digitized by Google

dition to Afghanistan, he placed the resources of the Punjab unreservedly at the disposal of the Governor-General, and it was not till after his death that the hostility of the Lahore cabinet was openly developed. It was then that the Sikh officers on the frontier entered into a hostile correspondence with the disaffected in Afghanistan, and intrigued against the British Government with the tribes who held the command of the passes. The ministers at Lahore remonstrated in a lofty tone against the constant movement of British armaments and convoys through the Punjab, asserting that there was nothing in the treaties between the two states to sanction the conversion of their country into a highway for British troops; and it required the extraordinary tact of our representative, Mr. George Clerk, to prevent a direct collision. This opposition indefinitely augmented the perils of our position in Afghanistan, and exasperated Sir William Macnaghten to such a degree that throughout the ensuing year, he never ceased to press on Lord Auckland the necessity of "curbing the Sings," as the Sikhs were termed, "and macadamizing the Punjab, and annexing Peshawur to the dominions of Shah Soojah."

Russian complaints against Khiva, 1840.

Soon after the occupation of Cabul, the Russophobia which incessantly oppressed the minds of Sir William Macnaghten, Sir Alexander Burnes, and many others, was raised to fever heat by the report that a great Russian expedition was marching on Khiva, which they considered the immediate precursor of a movement towards the Indus, though the intervening country of more than a thousand miles consists of deserts without water, and mountains covered with perpetual snow. Khiva, the celebrated Kharism of early Mahomedan history, lies to the south of the sea of Aral, on the banks of the Oxus, towards its estuary. With the exception of the land on the banks of that river and the oasis of Merv, the country presents the aspect of a continuous waste, unrelieved by mountains, rivers, lakes, or forests. The population does not greatly exceed a million, and consists chiefly of Oosbegs. For half a century, the Khan, or ruler,

Digitized by Google

had been in the habit of committing depredations on Russian caravans, attacking Russian out stations on the sea of Aral, and kidnapping Russian subjects whom he sold into slavery. After repeated remonstrances from Orenberg, a Russian envoy was sent to demand the release of the slaves, but the barbarian chief placed him in confinement. The Emperor then tried the experiment of retaliation, and in 1836 laid an embargo on all the property and the subjects of the Khan within his dominions; but scarcely a hundred of the captives were liberated in the course of two years. The Emperor at length resolved to despatch a military expedition against Khiva, to fulfil the imperative obligation of protecting the lives and liberty of his own subjects.

British diplomacy in Central Asia, 1839-40.

This expedition had a twofold motive. In his Simla manifesto, Lord Auckland stated that the object of the expedition across the Indus was "to give the name and just influence of the British Government its proper footing among the nations of Central Asia." The ambitious spirit of Sir William Macnaghten was prepared to carry out this novel and adventurous policy to an extent which alarmed even his own Government. Soon after the occupation of Cabul, he sent a regiment of infantry and a troop of horse artillery to Bameean in the Hindoo Koosh, under the direction of Dr. Lord, the political agent, who pushed forward the force still farther into the Oosbeg district of Syghan, and installed a chief of his own selection in the government of it. This aggressive movement, for which there was no occasion and no excuse, appeared to indicate a settled design to establish British influence and power in Turkistan, and spread alarm among its different rulers. Major Todd, who had been sent as the British representative to Herat, was diligently employed in improving its fortifications, and had, moreover, sent a communication to the Khan of Khiva, offering him British friendship and alliance. The Khan, threatened with a Russian invasion, had also sent an envoy to Herat to make proposals for a treaty. Major Todd then deputed Captain Abbot, one of his

Digitized by Google

assistants, to Khiva to persuade the Khan to propitiate the Government of Russia by liberating the captives; but he exceeded his instructions and proposed a British alliance offensive and defensive. The proposal was immediately disavowed by the Government of India, and he was recalled, but the repudiation was not generally known, and the influence of this rash procedure remained without correction. Colonel Stoddart had also been sent on a mission to Bokhara by Mr. McNeill. These simultaneous movements, military and diplomatic, at Syghan, and at Khiva, at the source and the mouth of the Oxus, at Herat, and at Bokhara, raised a suspicion at St. Petersburg that the object of England was not simply to prevent the advance of Russian influence to India, but to introduce British influence into Central Asia, and the Emperor took his measures accordingly. The Russian expedition to Khiva had been timed to leave Orenberg in April, 1840, but the Emperor was induced to hasten its departure by the rapid establishment of British power in Afghanistan, and the activity of British diplomacy beyond its limits, and it was ordered to proceed at the beginning of winter in November, 1839. The manifesto which announced it, not only enumerated the grievances which the Russians had suffered from the Khivans, but adopting the language of Lord Auckland's proclamation, stated that the expedition "was intended to strengthen in that part of Asia the lawful influence to which Russia has a right, and which alone can ensure the maintenance of peace." In the Russian account of it, the object was affirmed without disguise to be "to establish the strong influence of Russia in the Khanats"—as the principalities of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokan are styled—"and to prevent the influence of the East India Company from taking root in Central Asia." The two European powers, destined eventually to divide political influence in Asia between them, were in fact, at this period, jealous of each other's progress, and resorted to the fatal expedient of fitting out armaments to counteract it. "If we go on at this rate," said Baron Brunow, the Russian Minister in

Digitized by Google

London to Lord Palmerston, "the Cossack and the sepoy will soon cross bayonets on the Oxus." The Russian expedition proved a total failure. The army consisting of 3,000 foot, 2,000 horse, and twenty-two field guns, with 10,000 camels, started from Orenberg in November on a march of a thousand miles to Khiva; but the attempt to traverse the desert between the Caspian sea and the sea of Aral in the depth of winter, when the ground was covered with snow to the depth of many feet, and not a blade of grass was to be found for several hundred miles, was an act of infatuation. After advancing to the centre of this scene of desolation, the expedition completely broke down, and the General prudently retraced his steps to Orenberg, with the loss of the greater portion of his materiel and his men. Major Todd, after the recal of Captain Abbot, deputed Captain Richmond Shakespeare on the same errand to Khiva. He reached it at the critical period when the Khan was overwhelmed with a dread of Russian vengeance, which served to strengthen our representations, and induced him to liberate four hundred Russian captives, whom Captain Shakespeare had the pleasure of conveying to Orenberg. The Russian Government felt the same irritation at the intrusion of British agency and influence into any of the provinces of Turkistan, as the British Government had felt at the interference of Russia at Cabul and Candahar. The liberation of the captives was attributed by the Russians to the terror of their power, and every idea of obligation to the British officer for his officious services was distinctly repudiated.

The Bala Hissar and the cantonments, 1839.

To return to Cabul. The first and most important question which arose upon the determination to hold Afghanistan with a British force, was the housing of the troops, more especially during the approaching winter. The Bala Hissar, or citadel of Cabul, stood on a hill, and completely commanded the city. It afforded accommodation for 5,000 men, and if well provisioned and fortified could be held by a thousand men against any force or skill which Afghanistan could bring against it. Captain

Digitized by Google

Havelock had remarked soon after the occupation of Cabul, "Here then all depends in a military point of view on a firm hold of the Bala Hissar. It is the key of Cabul. The troops that hold it ought not to allow themselves to be dislodged but by a siege, and they must awe its population by their mortars and their howitzers." Lieut. — now Sir Henry— Durand, the engineer of the force, strongly urged the occupation of the upper portion of it by the troops. They were accordingly cantoned there, and preparations were made to provide cover for the military stores and ammunition, and to improve the fortifications, which would soon have become impregnable; but Shah Soojah maintained that it was his palace, and that the privacy of his zenana would be disturbed if any portion of it were occupied as a barrack. Some of the native chiefs likewise raised objections to the establishment of a British garrison within its walls, and for the very reason which rendered such a measure indispensable to the safety of the army. The works were therefore discontinued, and the troops lodged in temporary houses at the base of the citadel. The Shah and the envoy took up their residence for the winter in the milder climate of Jellalabad. On their return to the capital in the spring, the Shah demanded the whole of the Bala Hissar for his seraglio, consisting of a hundred and sixty females, and Sir W. Macnaghten yielded to his importunity, contrary to his own better judgment, but not without the concurrence of the Commander of the forces, Sir Willoughby Cotton. The British troops were therefore turned out into cantonments erected in the plain in the most exposed position which could have been selected. This fatal weakness on the part of the Envoy eventually entailed the loss of his own life, and the annihilation of the army. The whole of the Afghan policy from first to last was a succession of unexampled blunders, but the crowning act of folly was the evacuation of the Bala Hissar to make room for the women of the king.

Herat, 1840. On the arrival of the army at Candahar the Envoy despatched Major Todd as political agent to Herat to

Digitized by Google

conclude a treaty with Shah Kamran, to conciliate his vizier, Yar Mahomed, and to improve the fortifications of the city. To maintain British influence at that court, money was sent in profusion from Cabul; but Yar Mahomed took great offence at the earnest efforts of Major Todd to put down the execrable traffic in slaves in which he was largely engaged, and he likewise professed to be alarmed at the political movements of British agents in Central Asia. While receiving constant supplies of money from the British Government he opened a correspondence with the nearest Persian governor, and offered to place the whole country at the disposal of the king. Incensed at these acts of perfidy, Sir William Macnaghten urged the annexation of Herat to the territories of Shah Soojah, but Lord Auckland, believing that Yar Mahomed might have been induced to apply to Persia, in consequence of the diplomatic movements of our officers in the neighbouring countries, determined to overlook his past delinquencies, and make another experiment on his gratitude. The supply of guns and muskets, of ammunition and money, was consequently renewed, and with such prodigality as to terrify the financial authorities in Calcutta. This lavish expenditure resulted only in more audacious intrigues with Persia. Kamran addressed a letter to the king, in which he styled himself the faithful servant of the Persian crown, and proposed a united effort to expel the infidels, whom he said he tolerated only for their money. Under this fresh provocation, Lord Auckland's mind began to waver regarding the expedition to Herat, which Sir William continued to press with unabated earnestness; but he was now in Calcutta at his own Council board, and the Commander-in-chief demonstrated to him that the present strength of the Indian army was altogether inadequate for any new undertaking. The expedition was therefore definitively negatived, notwithstanding the unabated importunity of the Envoy, who pronounced the conduct of the Governor-General to be "drivelling beneath contempt," and "sighed for a Wellesley or a Hastings."

Digitized by Google

State of the Government of Afghanistan, 1840.

The conviction daily became more confirmed that Shah Soojah not only had no hold on the affections of his subjects, but that he was an object of intense aversion to them. The Afghans whom he had appointed to the administration of districts were venal and oppressive, but the main cause of his unpopularity was the infidel aid on which he rested for support. It could not be concealed from the Afghans that while he was the nominal sovereign, the country was in truth ruled by the Envoy, and that all real power was in the hands of the foreign unbelievers, whose presence in the country was felt to be a visitation like the plague. Nor had the Shah the means of satisfying the expectations of his needy aristocracy, even if they had been moderate. The most productive provinces which once belonged to the crown of Cabul had been annexed to the Punjab by Runjeet Sing, and the remaining districts yielded only fifteen lacs of rupees a-year, which were scarcely sufficient to pay the priesthood, and to meet the expenses of the Shah's soldiers and his own household. Among the British officers entrusted with the management of districts, were the honorable names of Pottinger, Rawlinson, Todd, Leech, and Mackeson, but there were others who brought odium on the Government by their haughty bearing and their wanton and arbitrary proceedings. The first mission to Cabul had not inspired the Afghans with a very exalted idea of English morals, and, after the occupation of the country, the undisguised licentiousness of some of the officers, and more especially of several of those who, for obvious reasons, took up their residence in the city, the invasion of the harems of the chiefs, and the dishonour inflicted on their families, brought down curses on the "infidel dogs." Everything concurred to render our presence hateful and our position precarious. During the twenty-seven months of our occupation, the Government was a government of sentry boxes, and it was sustained only by the gleam of British bayonets. The country was garrisoned, not governed, and we were reposing

Digitized by Google

on a smothered volcano. Yet so confident did Sir William Macnaghten feel of the security of our situation that he sent for Lady Macnaghten to Cabul. His example was followed by other officers, and the guardianship of ladies in an enemy's country, hundreds of miles from our own frontier, was added to the other embarrassments of our position.

Movements of Dost Mahomed, 1840.

The first disturbance broke out in the Khyber pass where, within a few weeks of the occupation of Cabul, the mountaineers massacred a large detachment of troops and carried off their baggage in triumph. Through the length and breadth of the land, from the neighbourhood of Jellalabad to Khelat, violence was the rule, and repose the exception. One of the most serious revolts occurred in Belochistan, in the middle of 1840, when the whole province was wrested from us, the chief whom General Willshire had chosen was deposed, and the son of Mehrab Khan seated on the throne. General Nott was obliged to march down from Candahar to restore our authority in this important principality, which though wild and thinly populated extends from the banks of the Indus to the confines of Persia. The capital was recaptured and our power re-established. But the great source of anxiety throughout the year 1840, was connected with the movements of Dost Mahomed. After his flight from Cabul in August, 1839, he was hospitably entertained by the chief of Khooloom beyond Bameean. He was then induced to accept the invitation of Nusser-oolla, the Ameer of Bokhara the "commander of the faithful," as he was styled, but who was for more than thirty years the most brutal tyrant in all Transoxiana. Dost Mahomed and his sons were treated at first with some show of kindness, but it was not long before they were subjected to a rigorous and painful captivity, which was subsequently relaxed on the intercession of the King of Persia, and on the appearance of British troops at Syghan. Meanwhile, Jubbur Khan, after wandering from place to place with the females of the Dost's family, was persuaded to entrust them to the protection of the British Government. The confidence thus

Digitized by Google

reposed in our good faith by a people proverbial for perfidy, was no ordinary tribute of honour to our national character. The ladies and children were conveyed to Hindostan and treated with every consideration. The Dost at length succeeded in making his escape from Bokhara, and returned to Khooloom, where he was received with open arms by the chief, who placed the resources of the province at his disposal. The Oosbegs crowded to his standard, and in a short time he found himself at the head of a force of 6,000 or 8,000 men, with which he resolved to cross the Hindoo Koosh, raise the war cry of the Prophet, and, gathering strength from the unpopularity of the Shah and his infidel supporters, march in triumph to Cabul. An entire company of Captain Hopkins's Afghan regiment deserted to him with their arms and accoutrements, under the guidance of their native commandant, Saleh Mahomed. The British outposts which had been rashly planted in these mountain stations without any support were withdrawn in haste. Cabul was thrown into a state of commotion, and the inhabitants commenced closing their shops and removing their families. The representative of the Lahore Government began openly to intrigue against the Shah. The region north of Cabul was ripe for insurrection. "The Afghans," wrote Sir William, "are powder, and the Dost is a lighted match;" but the alarm subsided as speedily as it arose. Brigadier Dennie, who had been sent to reinforce Bameean, came up with the Dost on the 18th September, and with a mere handful of troops obtained a decisive victory over the whole host of Oosbegs.

Surrender of Dost Mahomed, 1840.

The Dost, after this defeat, moved into the Kohistan, or highlands north of the capital. The chiefs had recently returned from the presence of the Shah, to whom they had taken an oath of fidelity on the Koran, but they received their former master with cordiality, and prepared heartily to espouse his cause. Sir Robert Sale was sent into the hills to attack them and had signal success at Tootundurra, but was soon after defeated in an injudicious

Digitized by Google

attempt to capture a fort. Dost Mahomed, after flitting about the country for two or three weeks, came down into the Nijrow district, a few miles from the capital, which again presented a scene of fermentation. The British officials were filled with consternation; guns were mounted on the citadel to overawe the town, and the Envoy talked of "the disgrace of being locked up in Cabul for some time." Sir Robert Sale, who had been incessantly tracking the Dost, came upon him on the 2nd November in the valley of Purwandurra. The heights around were bristling with an armed population, but he had only about two hundred ill-mounted, though strong and sturdy Afghans with him. He had no intention to attack his pursuers, but the 2nd Native Cavalry galloped down upon him and he resolved boldly to meet the charge. Raising himself in his stirrup, and uncovering his head, he called upon his soldiers, in the name of God and the Prophet, to aid him in driving the accursed infidels from the land of the faithful. The cavalry troopers fled from the field like a flock of sheep, while their European officers fought on with the courage of heroes, till three of them were killed and two wounded. Sir Alexander Burnes, who had accompanied the force, sent a hasty note to Sir William Macnaghten to announce the disaster and to assure him there was now no course left but to fall back on Cabul, and concentrate all the troops there. The communication did not, however, reach him before the following afternoon, when he was taking a ride; but before he had recovered from the surprise it occasioned, a horseman rode up and accosted him with the words, "the Ameer is at hand." "What Ameer?" asked the Envoy. "Dost Mahomed Khan," was the reply, and immediately after, the Ameer presented himself, and having dismounted, placed his sword in the hands of Sir William and claimed his protection. "He had felt," he said, "even in the moment of victory, that it would be impossible for him to continue the contest. He had met his foes in an open field, and discomfited them, and the time had arrived when he could claim their consideration with

Digitized by Google

dignity." Sir William returned his sword and begged him to remount, and they rode together to the cantonments, where, with that ease which is characteristic of the natives of the East, he entered into free conversation, recounted his wanderings and sufferings during the last fifteen months, and made numerous enquiries regarding his family and relatives. His frank and princely bearing in the hour of adversity created a strong feeling of sympathy and admiration among the officers who crowded to listen to him, which was in no small degree heightened by the contempt they felt for the wretched puppet in the Bala Hissar. Sir William Macnaghten, when bewildered with the anxieties to which the approach of the Dost to Cabul gave rise, had said in his letters to Calcutta that no mercy should be shewn to the man who was the author of these distractions, and he had hinted at the proposal of setting a price on his head; but the magnanimous confidence of the Dost called forth all the noble feelings of his nature. In announcing his voluntary surrender to Lord Auckland, he said, "I hope he will be treated with liberality. His case is not parallel with that of the Shah. The Shah had no claim on us; we had no hand in depriving him of his kingdom, whereas, we ejected the Dost, who never offended us, in support of our policy, of which he is the victim." He was escorted to Calcutta, and the liberal sum of two lacs of rupees a-year was assigned for his support. He became the honoured guest of the Governor-General at the festivities of Government House, where he amused himself with testing the skill of Miss Eden at chess.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXV.

LORD AUCKLAND'S ADMINISTRATION—THE AFGHAN EXPEDITION, 1841–42.

Herat, 1841.

THE lenity shewn by Lord Auckland to Yar Mahomed in condoning his perfidy, and continuing the supply of arms and money, elicited at first some appearance of gratitude, but he speedily resumed his treacherous communications with the court of Persia, and Major Todd had the courage to refuse any payment beyond the monthly subsidy of 25,000 rupees. Yar Mahomed immediately renewed his intrigues with increased vigour, and despatched an agent to the Persian governor of Meshid, inviting him to unite in an attack on Candahar while the road to Cabul was blocked up with snow, and also instigated the disaffected chiefs of Western Afghanistan to revolt. This glaring act of perfidy exhausted the patience of Major Todd, who took advantage of the assemblage of a large British force in Upper Sinde, to suspend even the monthly allowance, till the pleasure of his Government was known. But this only served to kindle the wrath of the minister, and to increase his demands. On the 8th February, he required the payment of two lacs of rupees to discharge his own debts, as well as a further advance of money to improve the fortifications, and an increase of the regular stipend. Major Todd made the injudicious request that he would admit a contingent of British troops into Herat, and depute his own son to meet and escort them, if the measure were approved by his own Government. Yar Mahomed refused the request and peremptorily insisted on the immediate payment of all his demands, or the instant departure of the mission, and Major Todd at once determined to withdraw from

Digitized by Google

Herat. Lord Auckland was mortified with this precipitate movement which aggravated the difficulties of our position in Afghanistan, and cast an air of ridicule on the whole policy of the Government. The Major was dismissed from his political employment, and remanded to his regiment. This has been considered a harsh if not an unjust measure, but it is impossible to peruse the clear and able vindication of this proceeding which Lord Auckland placed on record, without admitting the great force of his justification. The abrupt termination of the mission was in one respect inopportune, inasmuch as all our differences with Persia had been accommodated and the court of Persia was closed against the intrigues of Kamran before it occurred, though the fact was not known at the time to Major Todd; in other respects it cannot be considered unfortunate, as it withdrew our officers from the dangers to which they would inevitably have been exposed nine months later on our expulsion from Cabul.

General Nott and Major Rawlinson at Candahar, 1840.

The political charge of the province of Candahar had been entrusted to Major—now Sir Henry—Rawlinson, who had served his apprenticeship to diplomacy in Persia, where he had acquired a complete knowledge of the language and character of the people, and a clear perception of the position and policy of the different courts in Central Asia. He was second to none of the political officers whose talents were developed, and whose reputation was nurtured, in the instructive school of Afghan politics, and it was mainly owing to his foresight and management that our authority was maintained in that seething cauldron of rebellion. The military command was in the hands of General Nott, who, with all his infirmities of temper, possessed a fund of sound sense, a spirit of great decision, and no inconsiderable store of professional knowledge. He was prompt and energetic in dealing with the revolts which were continually cropping up around him, but the freedom of his remarks was displeasing to Sir W. Macnaghten and to Lord Auckland, and he was consequently refused the promotion to which his

Digitized by Google

rank and abilities entitled him. On the retirement of Sir Willoughby Cotton from Cabul, that important command should, in all fairness, have been entrusted to him; but he was again passed over; and it is melancholy to reflect how different would have been the course of events, and the fate of the army, if he had been at the side of Sir William Macnaghten, on the memorable morning of the 2nd November. The Dooranees who occupied the province of Zemindawer, lying between Candahar and Herat, were of Shah Soojah's own tribe; they had been subjected to great oppression during the ascendency of the Barukzyes and hailed the return of their prince as a deliverer with delight. If there was one province in Afghanistan more than another in which the Shah had reason to expect cordial loyalty and unflinching support, it was in that occupied by the Dooranees; but when their expectations of sharing the sweets of power under a ruler of their own clan were disappointed, and they found that all real power was monopolized by strangers and infidels, no tribe eventually manifested a more rancorous hostility to the Shah. In November, 1840, Aktar Khan, their chief, openly announced his intention to march on Candahar, and General Nott sent a force to beat up his quarters, which awed him into temporary submission. He succeeded in reassembling his army, and in July took up a position on the Helmund, with 6,000 men, in six divisions, with a priest at the head of each, and a banner inscribed "We have been trusting in God; may he guide and guard us." He was vigorously attacked by Colonel Woodburn and defeated, but assembled his followers again in the following month, when a more signal discomfiture broke up the confederacy. These successive reverses dismayed the Dooranee chiefs who came in and made their submission to the representative of the Shah, with the exception of Akram Khan, whose indomitable spirit resisted every overture and defied every threat. His feelings were well expressed in the common Afghan remark, "We are content with blood, but shall never be content with a master." In other countries, his

Digitized by Google

conduct might have been deemed patriotic, but in Afghanistan it was pronounced treasonable, and it was resolved that no mercy should be shewn him. One of his own countrymen was induced by a bribe to disclose his retreat; he was seized and brought into Candahar, and, under positive orders from Cabul, barbarously blown from a gun.

Eastern Ghilzyes, 1841.

The province lying to the north-east of Candahar was inhabited by the Ghilzyes, a fine muscular race, expert in the use of the musket, sword, and knife, and characterized by an intense ferocity of disposition, the result of centuries of rapine and petty warfare. They were able to bring 40,000 men into the field, and were as jealous of their own independence in their wild mountains, as they were eager to destroy that of others. They had in time past carried their victorious arms to the capital of Persia, and recorded their prowess on many a battle field in India. They had played an important part in the politics of Afghanistan, where, within three generations, they had exercised supreme authority. They had been the most resolute opponents of every invader, and had never bowed the neck to the rulers of Cabul or Candahar, but continued with perfect impunity their hereditary profession of levying black mail on all who traversed their mountains. Though Sir William Macnaghten had prevailed on them for an annual subsidy of 30,000 rupees to abstain from infesting the highways, their deep-rooted hostility to the intrusive foreigners was becoming daily more palpable, and it was resolved to strengthen the fortifications of Khelat-i-ghilzye which lay in the heart of their country. They were determined to oppose a measure which would restrain their freedom, and they boldly advanced to obstruct the progress of Colonel Weymer, who was sent against them with a body of 5,000 men. The combat, which took place on the 22nd May, 1841, lasted five hours; and it was not till ten in the evening that they quitted the field, carrying their wounded with them. The strength of the tribe was impaired by this and a subsequent defeat, and Sir William Macnagh-

Digitized by Google

ten began to congratulate himself on the cheering aspect of affairs in Afghanistan, and to flatter himself that all difficulty in managing the country was now removed. But Major Robinson, with a clearer appreciation of the precariousness of our position, did not fail to press on him the unpalatable truth that the country was universally pervaded by an implacable spirit of hostility, and that there would assuredly be a general outburst, on the first favourable opportunity.

Resolution to hold Afghanistan, 1841.

That opportunity was not far distant. The expense of garrisoning Afghanistan began to tell to an alarming extent on the finances of India. The army of occupation fell little short of 25,000 men, and the annual charge was moderately computed at a crore and a half of rupees. All the treasure accumulated by Lord William Bentinck's economical reforms had been exhausted, and the treasury was empty. The Court of Directors were alarmed, and at the close of 1840 communicated their apprehensions to Lord Auckland. The restored monarchy, they said, would evidently require a British force to maintain tranquillity within, and prevent aggression from without; to attempt to accomplish this object by a small force would be unwise and dangerous, and they should prefer the entire abandonment of the country, with a frank avowal of the complete failure of our project; but they left it to the Government of India to determine the course to be adopted—either a speedy withdrawal from the country, or a large increase of the army. When the surrender of Dost Mahomed was announced at the India House, the Directors stated that it had made no change in their views, and they trusted that advantage would be taken of this auspicious circumstance to bring the question to an issue in accordance with their wishes. Nothing could be more judicious than this recommendation. Since our entry into Afghanistan there had been no opportunity so favourable for retiring from it. All apprehension of an invasion from the west had disappeared. The Persian court was on the most friendly terms with us. The expedition of the Russians to

Digitized by Google

Khiva had failed, and they were no longer heard of in Central Asia. Dost Mahomed and his family were in our hands. Khelat had been recovered, and Belochistan reoccupied. "The noses of the Dooranee chiefs," as Sir William Macnaghten affirmed, "had been brought to the grindstone. Afghanistan was as quiet as an Indian district, and its tranquillity was miraculous." Lord Auckland could not, however, bring himself to approve of a retrograde movement in Afghanistan, before the authority of the Shah had been completely established, though it was impossible not to perceive that our presence was the chief cause of his unpopularity and insecurity. The two civil members of the Council concurred with him in voting for the maintenance of our position in Afghanistan. The two military members who would undoubtedly have voted with the Court of Directors for the withdrawal of our army, had no opportunity, either by accident or by design, of recording their opinions. Sir William Macnaghten, on hearing that the question of withdrawing the British force had been the subject of serious discussion, declared that to deprive the Shah of British support would be an act of "unparalleled political atrocity, and that he would pack up his all, and return to his asylum at Loodiana as soon as the resolution was communicated to him." We had, in fact, placed ourselves in a position from which it was impossible to recede without the complete collapse of our policy, which would have exposed us to the ridicule of Central Asia, and of the princes of India. Neither could we hold it without an enormous and apparently interminable expenditure, which would cripple the resources of Government, and deprive it of the power of doing justice to the interests of India.

Retrenchment and revolt, 1841-42.

The Governor-General, having resolved to remain in Afghanistan, opened a new loan, and inculcated a system of rigid economy on the Envoy, which was to be begun with curtailing the stipends of the chiefs. By that fatality which seemed to cling to every measure connected with this ill-starred expedition, the retrenchments which should have been delayed to the last were the first

Digitized by Google

adopted. These stipends were considered by Sir William Macnaghten as a compensation to the chiefs for relinquishing the immemorial practice of levying contributions on the highways in their respective districts. He had many misgivings about the wisdom of this economy, which would affect every tribe in the country, but the orders from Calcutta were peremptory, and the eastern Ghilzye chiefs were the first to be summoned to Cabul and informed that the exigencies of the state rendered it necessary to reduce their allowance. They received the announcement at the beginning of October, without any apparent discontent, made their salaam to the Envoy, and returning to their mountain fastnesses, plundered a caravan, and closed the road to India by blocking up the passes. They had always regarded these exactions from travellers in the light of an ancient inheritance, and an indefeasible right. They were magnanimously indifferent to the politics of Afghanistan, and cared not who ruled, so long as their privileges were respected. The stipends now about to be reduced had been guaranteed to them when we entered the country, and they had performed their part of the contract with exemplary fidelity. They had not allowed a finger to be raised against our posts, or couriers, or weak detachments, and convoys of every description had passed through their terrific defiles, the strongest mountain barriers in the world, without interruption. The Shah, on hearing of this hostile movement, sent Humza Khan, the governor of the Ghilzyes, whose allowance had also been retrenched, to bring them to reason, but as he was himself at the root of the conspiracy, his presence only served to fan the flame. The 35th Native Infantry, commanded by Colonel Monteith, which was under orders to return to the provinces, was directed by the Envoy to "proceed to the passes and chastise these rascals and open the road to India," but he was treacherously attacked during the night by the mountaineers, who were abetted by the horsemen and officers the Shah had deputed to accompany and assist him, and he lost much baggage. Sir Robert Sale,

Digitized by Google

who had been appointed to command the brigade of troops returning to India, was sent forward to the support of the 35th. He encountered no little opposition in the Khoord Cabul, and on reaching Tezeen ordered a large detachment to proceed against the fort of the leader of the Ghilzyes, the capture of which would have inflicted a severe, and perhaps a decisive blow on the insurrection. The wily chief sent his envoys to cozen the political agent with the force, who allowed himself to be drawn into a treaty which conceded nearly all the claims of the insurgents. Their stipends were restored, and a sum of 10,000 rupees was actually paid down to them, though they were then in open hostility. Not only was the opportunity of nipping the revolt in the bud thus sacrificed, but it was indefinitely strengthened by this fatuous compliance, which proclaimed the weakness of Government, and enabled the chiefs to announce that Sir Robert Sale had been obliged to purchase their forbearance. They gave hostages, it is true, to accompany the force, well knowing that we should not injure them, under any circumstances, but they took care at the same time to send emissaries to raise the tribes on the route, who attacked the brigade at every point as it advanced towards Gundamuk. Sir Robert Sale reached that station in the beginning of November, and found all communication with Cabul cut off, and the intermediate country in a blaze of rebellion.

Security of the Envoy, 1841.

Sir William Macnaghten had been rewarded for his services by the Governorship of Bombay, and had made preparations for leaving Cabul in the beginning of November. Throughout the previous month, while the surface of society in Afghanistan presented the image of unruffled calm, a general confederacy, which embraced almost every influential chief of every tribe, was organized for the expulsion of the infidels from the country. Intimation of it poured in upon the British authorities from all quarters. Major Pottinger, who, since his departure from Herat, had taken charge of the political duties in the highlands north of

Digitized by Google

Cabul; Captain Colin Mackenzie, whose public occupation in the city placed him in a position to feel the native pulse; Lieutenant Conolly, in attendance at the Shah's court; Mohun Lall, a Cashmere youth who had received the benefit of an English education, and acted as Sir Alexander Burnes's moonshee, together, with many others, warned the Envoy of the storm which was gathering. But he had persuaded himself that the country was in a state of unexampled repose, and that the rising of the Ghilzyes was a mere local émeute which might be easily suppressed, and not the token of a national revolt. He was confirmed in this feeling of security by Sir Alexander, who was to succeed to his political employment, and who was supposed to enjoy the best opportunities of knowing the feelings of the chiefs and the people. On the evening of the 1st November he called on Sir William Macnaghten and congratulated him on leaving the country in a state of profound tranquillity. At the same hour, some of the conspirators were assembled in a house in the city to arrange the plan of the insurrection. Among the foremost was Abdoolla Khan, a proud and vindictive noble, who had been deprived of the headship of his tribe, and now revenged himself by fomenting the outbreak of the Ghilzyes. Aware of his sinister designs, Sir Alexander Burnes had sent him an offensive message, calling him a dog, and threatening to recommend the Shah to deprive him of his ears. At this meeting he advised that the first attack on the morrow should be made on the house of the man who had insulted him. Sir Alexander was unfortunately more obnoxious to the Afghan chiefs, not excepting even the Shah himself, than any of the other British officers, some of whom, by their genial disposition and their high moral character, had acquired general esteem. He received repeated premonitions of his danger, but he had an overweening confidence in his personal influence over the Afghans, and treated every suggestion with contempt. The insurgents surrounded his house at dawn with loud yells, when for the first time he became aware of the peril of his situation,

Insurrection at Cabul. Murder of Sir A. Burnes, 1841.

Digitized by Google

and despatched a note to Sir William for succour. He likewise sent two messengers to Abdoolla Khan offering to redress all his grievances if he would restrain the fury of the people; but one of them was murdered, and the other covered with wounds. He harangued the mob from his balcony, and offered large sums for his own life and that of his brother, but the Afghans were thirsting for his blood, and for the more tempting plunder of the neighbouring treasury. Captain William Broadfoot fell in defence of the house, but not before he had slain six of his assailants. A Mahomedan Cashmerian then entered the house, and approaching Sir Alexander solemnly swore on the Koran to conduct him to a place of safety if he would direct his guard to cease firing on the insurgents, but no sooner had he and his brother entered the garden, than the miscreant called out "This is Secunder—Sir Alexander—Burnes Sahib," and they were immediately hacked to pieces by the infuriated crowd. The insurgents then attacked the adjoining house of Captain Johnson, the paymaster of the Shah's force, and plundered it of 170,000 rupees, which he had imprudently removed from the Bala Hissar to suit his own convenience. The houses of the officers were then set on fire, and all the records consumed. The mob did not originally exceed a hundred, but the number was rapidly augmented by the success of this exploit and the booty which had been acquired, and the whole city was soon in a flame of hostile excitement. The confederate chiefs who had stirred up the émeute, had so little expectation of its success that they kept aloof from the assailants, and had their horses ready for flight on the first appearance of British troops; and it was not till the afternoon, when it appeared that no efforts were to be made to avenge the outrage and to vindicate our authority, that they ventured abroad. The slightest exhibition of energy at the commencement would have extinguished the insurrection. This assertion rests not only on the authority of the officers who survived the catastrophe, but also on that of all the native chiefs to whose custody they were subsequently committed. It appears absolutely

Digitized by Google

incredible that a British army of 5,000 men should have been allowed to remain inactive within a mile and a quarter of the spot where British officers of the highest rank had been murdered, and a British treasury sacked by a handful of insurgents.

General Elphinstone's infirmities, 1841.

The General-in-chief in Afghanistan was General Elphinstone, a gallant old Queen's officer, but utterly disqualified for this important and dangerous post by his physical infirmities. These were fully known to Lord Auckland when he importuned him to accept the post, contrary to the advice of Sir Jasper Nicholls, the Commander-in-chief, who earnestly recommended that it should be given to General Nott; but General Nott had incurred the displeasure of Lord Auckland by the freedom of his remarks. It is impossible, therefore, to exonerate the Governor-General from a large share of the responsibility of the overwhelming calamity which ensued, and which is to be attributed to the incompetency of the officer entrusted with the supreme command in a country ripe for revolt. General Elphinstone was equally unfitted for this arduous duty by his mental weakness, and the total want of all decision of character. It was at seven in the morning of the 2nd November, that Sir William received information that the city was in a ferment, and that Sir Alexander Burnes's house was besieged, and he proceeded immediately to consult the General. The Envoy made light of the émeute which he said would speedily subside, and the General was too happy to be spared the exertion of thought, not to acquiesce in this opinion. It was decided, however, that Brigadier Shelton's brigade, which was encamped on the neighbouring heights of Sea Sung, should be ordered to proceed to the Bala Hissar to act as might appear expedient, that assistance should be sent, if possible, to Sir Alexander Burnes, and that the remainder of the troops should be concentrated in the cantonments. At a period when moments were of inestimable value, hours were wasted in communications with the Shah regarding the admission of the Brigadier's force into the Bala

Fatal procrastination, 1841.

Digitized by Google

Hissar, which was at first refused, and it was mid-day before these orders and counter-orders terminated with permission to march. On the arrival of the Brigadier, the Shah asked who had sent him, and why he had come? The Shah himself, however, was the only man who acted with promptitude on that memorable morning. On hearing of the outbreak he ordered his own regiment of Hindostanees under the command of Colonel Campbell to proceed at once to the spot and quell it. If that officer had promptly marched along the skirt of the hill without any incumbrance, he might have arrived in time to save Sir Alexander Burnes and the treasure, but he proceeded with his guns through the narrow and intricate streets of the city, where his way was soon blocked up by the opposition of the inhabitants. The insurgents, flushed with success, drove his regiment back, and Brigadier Shelton did nothing more than cover its retreat to the Bala Hissar. No effort was made by the Envoy or the Commander-in-chief, to extricate Sir Alexander, which might have been effected with perfect ease. There was a short and direct route of only a mile and a quarter from the cantonment to the scene of disturbance by the open Kohistan road, and a body of a thousand men might have been sent forward at once with their guns. Their approach at an early hour would, at once, have restored order, more especially as that quarter of the city was inhabited by the tribe of Kuzzilbashes, who were friendly to us, and would immediately have joined the force. Such a movement was the more imperative, as the provisions for the Shah's army, to the extent of 8,000 maunds, were stored in a wretched fort not 500 yards from Sir Alexander's residence. The mob, after plundering and burning his house, and sacking Captain Johnson's treasury, immediately attacked this fort. Captain—now Sir George—Lawrence, entreated permission to proceed to its relief, but it was peremptorily refused him. Captain Colin Mackenzie gallantly defended the post for two days without food or rest, and at length, seeing no hope of succour, was obliged to abandon it and cut his way to the cantonments.

Digitized by Google

Inactivity of the Authorities, 1841.

On the evening of this first day of disaster, the General, instead of forming a vigorous plan of operations for the morrow, contented himself with writing to the Envoy: "We must see what the morning brings, and then think what can be done." The morning revealed the fact that nothing was wanting to quench the rebellion but promptitude and resolution. The 37th Native Infantry had been summoned back on the previous day from the Khoord Cabul where it had been left by Sir Robert Sale, and Major Griffiths, the commandant, though vigorously opposed at every step by the insurgents, succeeded in conducting the corps in safety to the cantonment, with all its baggage and its sick and two guns. Nothing, however, was done on the second day except a feeble effort to penetrate the city with an inadequate force, but it was not despatched till three hours after noon, and it was driven back by the thousands of armed men, whom the success of the rising had brought into the city. Within thirty hours of the outbreak, with a body of troops, sufficient, under a man of spirit, to maintain our position against all attacks, the Envoy deemed it necessary to send letters to General Nott at Candahar, and to Sir Robert Sale to importune them to hasten with their regiments to the relief of the garrison. It was then that the fatal error of relinquishing the Bala Hissar and cantoning the troops in the plain was revealed in all its intensity. These cantonments had been planted in a piece of low ground, nearly a mile in extent, with ramparts so contemptible, that a pony was backed by an officer to scramble down the ditch and over the wall. They were so situated as to be commanded by the neighbouring hills, and by intermediate forts which had not been occupied or demolished, and the troops could neither enter nor leave them without being exposed to a raking fire from these various points of attack. Human folly seemed to have exhausted itself in the construction of these works in the immediate neighbourhood of a populous, fanatic, and disaffected city. To crown the blunders of the political and military authorities, the com-

Digitized by Google

missariat stores on which the existence of the force depended, and which ought to have been lodged in the Bala Hissar, or at least within the cantonments, had been deposited in a small fort four hundred yards beyond them, the access to which was commanded by an unoccupied fort and by the King's garden. The commissariat fort, which was guarded by only eighty men, was vigorously assailed by the insurgents, and the General proposed to send out a detachment to enable Lieutenant Warren, who was in command, to evacuate it. There was a universal remonstrance against this act of insanity, and two companies were therefore sent to strengthen the garrison, —while 4,000 men were lying idle in the cantonments—but they were repulsed with the loss of two officers killed, and three wounded. Thrice did the General yield so far to the importunity of his staff as to promise to despatch sufficient reinforcements, and thrice did he alter his mind. The enemy began at length to undermine the walls of the fort, and Lieutenant Warren, despairing of all succour, was obliged to abandon it; and men and officers looked over the walls of the cantonment with burning indignation, while a rabble of Afghans was diligently employed, like a swarm of ants, in carrying off the provisions on which their only hope of sustaining life was placed. The loss of these stores completely paralyzed the garrison.

General Sale declines returning to Cabul, 1841.

The urgent request sent by Sir William Macnaghten to General Sale and General Nott to come to the relief of the cantonment without any delay, produced no result. General Sale had reached Gundamuk when he received this communication, which was accompanied by one from General Elphinstone who desired him to return, if he could place his sick and wounded in safety with the Afghan irregulars at that station. A council of war was held, and it was determined to push on to Jellalabad, instead of falling back on Cabul. General Sale has been censured by high authority for this movement, but the reasons which recommended it appear to be conclusive. The winter had already set in with intense rigour. The brigade had lost

Digitized by Google

a great portion of its camp equipage; the camel drivers had nearly all deserted with their animals, and to transport the ammunition and provisions it would be necessary to abandon the remainder of the tents. The cartridges in store were not sufficient for more than three actions, and the force would probably be obliged to fight the enemy at each of the eight marches to Cabul. The sick and the wounded had increased to three hundred, and to leave them at Gundamuk, either with or without the irregulars, would be to consign them to inevitable destruction. On the other hand the occupation of a position like Jellalabad was recommended by the consideration that it would keep open the communication with India, and provide a defensible fortress and a safe retreat for the Cabul force to fall back on, if circumstances should render it necessary.

General Nott sends a force to Cabul, which returns, 1841.

The aspect of affairs at Candahar towards the close of 1841 was considered so tranquil that it was resolved to send back to India three of the regiments then in the province. But they had not accomplished more than two marches when unquestionable tokens of the coming storm were afforded by the total destruction of a detachment in the north, and by the altered and offensive bearing of the people. On the 14th November, General Nott received, in a quill, the letter sent by the Envoy the day after the murder of Sir Alexander Burnes requiring three regiments to be despatched to his relief with all speed. He was exceedingly averse, however, to part with the brigade, which he considered would be more useful at Candahar. The troops could not, he argued, reach Cabul under five weeks, by which time, "everything would be settled one way or another." They would be required to fight every inch of the way beyond Ghuzni, and to wade through the snow; and they would eventually arrive in so crippled a state as to be wholly unfit for service. In obedience, however, to the orders of the Envoy the three regiments were despatched under Colonel Maclaren, but the General did not conceal from him his own conviction that they were marching to certain destruction.

Digitized by Google

That they might have reached Cabul in safety, was however, by no means improbable, but they commenced their march with great reluctance, and returned to Candahar with great alacrity on the first appearance of a few flakes of snow, and the loss of some commissariat donkeys.

The question of Assassination, 1841.

Extraordinary exertions were made by the Commissariat officers to obtain supplies from the neighbouring villages, and within four days of the outbreak the General was enabled to inform the Envoy that they had temporarily, and he hoped permanently, got over the difficulty of provisions. "Our case," he said "is not yet desperate; I do not mean to impress that, but it must be borne in mind that it goes very fast." The Envoy, seeing the honour and safety of the force in such keeping, felt himself constrained to open negotiations with the insurgent chiefs. Through the moonshee Mohun Lall who continued to reside in the city, he made them an offer of two, three, or even five lacs of rupees, but, as might have been expected, this fresh token of weakness only served to increase their arrogance. At the same time Lieutenant John Conolly, the political agent with the Shah in the Bala Hissar, authorized the moonshee to offer 10,000 or even 15,000 rupees for the head of each of the principal rebels. There is nothing to support the attempt which has been made to connect the Envoy with this atrocious proposal except the circumstance that Lieutenant Conolly was in constant communication with him; on the other hand, there is irrefragable evidence of the detestation in which he held the practice, in his letter to the moonshee in which he regretted "to find that it was ever considered his object to encourage assassination." "The rebels," he said, "are very wicked men, but we must not take unlawful means to destroy them." On a subsequent occasion, when the subject was brought up in the presence of Captain Skinner, he assured him that his mind revolted from the very suggestion of such a procedure.

Brig. Shelton

The utter incompetence of the General was

Digitized by Google

comes into cantonment, 1841.

hurrying the garrison to destruction, but there appeared some faint hope of deliverance, if Brigadier Shelton could be associated with him in the command, and he was accordingly recalled to the cantonment from the Bala Hissar where he had continued since the morning of the 2nd of November. He was a younger and more vigorous officer, distinguished for his dauntless courage and iron nerve, and his arrival on the 9th November was hailed by the desponding garrison with delight. But it was soon found that the obliquities of his disposition completely neutralized the value of his services. If he had chosen to control his petulant humours, and had cordially sustained and strengthened the General, he might have earned the gratitude of his country by securing the salvation of the force, but the discord which arose from his intractable disposition only served to increase the difficulties of the crisis. The Brigadier complained of the officious interference of the General, or rather of the officers who advised him, as he does not appear ever to have had an opinion of his own. The General pronounced him insubordinate and contumacious; and between them the national honour was trampled in the dust, and 15,000 lives sacrificed. In the desperate condition to which affairs had been reduced there was still one course which would have extricated the army from all its perils,—an immediate retreat to the Bala Hissar. From that impregnable position the troops could have sallied forth on the city, and procured supplies from the surrounding country. The Shah did not cease to urge this movement, which was equally recommended by the Envoy and the General. But the Brigadier pertinaciously resisted it on grounds which were palpably frivolous, inasmuch as he himself had recently brought a regiment and a gun from the citadel into the cantonment without meeting with any impediment. His incredible obstinacy prevented the adoption of this course and sealed the doom of the army.

Action at Behmaroo, 1841.

On the 13th the enemy planted two guns on the Behmaroo hills and began to cannonade the can-

Digitized by Google

tonments. The General and the Brigadier resisted all the entreaties of the Envoy to make an attempt to dislodge them, but as he continued to insist on the despatch of a strong force, and took the entire responsibility of the movement upon himself, the Brigadier started before daybreak and was engaged throughout the day in conflict with the enemy. The success was not decisive, but it was the last which the garrison was destined to achieve. There is little interest in dwelling on the long and melancholy catalogue of errors and disasters, faithfully and eloquently described by Lieutenant—now Sir Vincent—Eyre who bore a large share in the dangers of the siege, which followed closely upon each other, disgusting the officers, disheartening the men, and finally sinking the army in irretrievable ruin. On the 16th, Major Pottinger and Lieutenant Haughton, the sole survivors of the gallant body of men in the Kohistan, in the defence of which a noble Goorkha corps fell to a man, reached the cantonment exhausted with fatigue and wounds. The 23rd November brought the climax of military disasters. The enemy had again made their appearance on the Behmaroo hills, and the Envoy urged the necessity of a vigorous effort to dislodge them from a position which enabled them to inflict the greatest injury on the cantonments. The Brigadier protested against the movement; the troops, he said, were dispirited and exhausted by living on half rations of parched wheat, but his objections were over-ruled and a detachment was sent out which, being weak, failed to accomplish the object. A council of war was then held when, upon the earnest entreaty of the Envoy, it was determined that a stronger force should set out before daybreak, on the morning of the 23rd. The hill was carried without difficulty, but as day began to dawn, thousands of armed men streamed out of the city, and a general action was brought on. By an act of incredible fatuity, Brigadier Shelton had taken out a single gun with him, which was admirably worked and told with great effect on the

Action of the 23rd November, 1841.

Digitized by Google

enemy, till the vent became overheated and it was rendered unserviceable. The Afghans with their long range matchlocks poured a destructive fire upon our musketeers, and laughed at their balls which fell short of the mark. The troops, pining with cold and hunger, and utterly broken in spirit, refused to follow their officers, and were soon in confused and disastrous flight. The Brigadier with iron courage stood in the thickest of the fire and called on his men to support the honour of their flag. The flying regiments paused and reformed, and the Mahomedan fanatics shrunk from the assault. At this juncture, Abdoollah Khan, one of the insurgent chiefs whom Mohun Lall had marked out for assassination and who commanded the Afghan cavalry, fell and they fled in a panic to the city, followed by the infantry. Sir William was standing on the ramparts with the General, eagerly watching these movements, and urged him to send out a body of fresh troops to improve the advantage and complete the victory, but he replied that it was a wild scheme. The Brigadier might have withdrawn his force in safety to the cantonments during the confusion, but he chose to halt; the enemy recovered from the panic, and rushed back on him with redoubled fury, when the whole body of English soldiers disgracefully abandoned the field and took to flight. The fugitives and the pursuers were so mingled in this race, that the Afghans might easily have captured the cantonments if they had known how to improve the advantage they had gained; but in the moment of victory, the chiefs drew off their men, and, after mutilating the bodies of the slain, returned to the city with shouts of exultation. This defeat at Behmaroo, as Brigadier Shelton truly observed, "concluded all exterior operations." A general gloom hung over the encampment; the army was thoroughly demoralized; the disasters and the dishonour of these three weeks, which were justly attributed to the imbecility and the mismanagement of the commanders, destroyed all confidence in them, and wore out the principle of military discipline.

Digitized by Google

Negotiations, 1841.

The day after this disaster, the Shah again entreated the Envoy to occupy the Bala Hissar, as the only course left to secure the honour and safety of the army, and Sir William pressed it on the military chiefs with increasing importunity, but they pertinaciously resisted all his entreaties, and General Elphinstone officially informed him that it was no longer feasible to maintain our position in the country, and advised him to have recourse to negotiation. With such imbecility at the head of the force, Sir William was obliged to submit to this humiliation and to solicit a conference with the insurgent chiefs, whom he met in the guardroom of one of the gateways. The debate, which was long and acrimonious, was brought to a close by Sultan Mahomed, who asserted in haughty and offensive language that, as the Afghans had beaten the English, they had a right to dictate the terms of capitulation, and he demanded that the whole army should surrender at discretion with its arms, ammunition, and treasure. The Envoy at once terminated the interview by declaring that he preferred death to dishonour. A week after, Akbar Khan, one of the sons of Dost Mahomed, a young soldier of great energy, but of a fiery and impetuous temper, arrived at Cabul, and was at once accepted as the leader of the national confederacy. He soon discovered that to extinguish the British force it was only necessary to defeat the efforts of the commissariat officers to obtain provisions. He accordingly arrested the progress of supplies by threatening with death all who were detected in furnishing them. Under the pressure of hunger, the troops daily became less capable of exertion, and the Envoy, seeing the destruction of the force inevitable, renewed his entreaty to withdraw it to the Bala Hissar, while the sick and wounded were sent under cover of the night, but the General raised a host of objections, and refused his concurrence. Sir William then suggested that they should endeavour to obtain provisions by their own good swords from the surrounding villages, but the General assured him that the only alternative left was to negotiate for a safe

Arrival of Akbar Khan, 1841.

Digitized by Google

retreat from the country on the most favourable terms possible.

Treaty of the 11th Dec., 1841.

Starvation now stared the ill-fated garrison in the face; on the 11th December there was food left only for the day's consumption of the fighting men, while the camp followers, who had been living on the carcases of camels, were completely famished. Supplies were not to be obtained for money because the villagers could not venture to sell them, nor by force because the commanders and the men had not the heart to fight, and the Envoy was constrained with infinite reluctance to make another offer of negotiation. A conference was accordingly held with the chiefs, and, after an angry discussion of two hours, the terms of a treaty were arranged. The salient points in it were, that the British troops at Candahar and Cabul, at Ghuzni and Jellalabad should evacuate the country, receiving every possible assistance in carriage and provisions, and that Dost Mahomed and his family should be set at liberty. Shah Soojah was to be allowed the option of remaining in Afghanistan with a pension of a lac of rupees a-year, or of accompanying the British troops to India. The army was to quit the cantonments within three days, and in the mean time to receive ample supplies of provisions, for which due payment was to be made, and four officers were to be delivered up as hostages for the performance of the stipulations. This is the most disgraceful transaction in the records of British India, but to form an impartial opinion of it, we must turn to the Envoy's own explanation. "The whole country," he wrote, "as far as we could learn, had risen in rebellion; our communications on all sides were cut off; we had been fighting forty days against superior numbers under most disadvantageous circumstances with a deplorable loss of life, and in a day or two must have perished of hunger. I had been repeatedly apprized by the military authorities that nothing could be done with our troops. The terms I secured were the best obtainable, and the destruction of 15,000 human beings would little have benefited our country, while the Govern-

Digitized by Google

ment would have been almost compelled to avenge our fate at whatever cost." The position of the Envoy has been vividly described by the historian of the Afghan war, "environed and hemmed in by difficulties and dangers, overwhelmed with responsibility which there was none to share—the lives of 15,000 men resting on his decision—the honour of his country at stake—with a perfidious enemy before him, a decrepit General at his side, and a paralyzed army at his back, he was driven to negotiate by the imbecility of his companions." The entire responsibility of this humiliating convention rests upon the two military commanders, than whom it would scarcely have been possible to select officers more completely disqualified for their post, the one by bodily infirmity and constitutional imbecility; the other by his perverse temper and his obstinacy. The brilliant success of Sir Robert Sale at Jellalabad shews how easily the position of the British army at Cabul might have been rectified, with the superior means and appliances at command, if the direction of affairs had devolved on Captain Lawrence, or Captain Colin Mackenzie, or Captain Eyre, or Major Pottinger, or any other of the noble spirits in the camp.

Violation of the Treaty by the enemy, 1841.

But it never was the intention of the Afghan leaders to fulfil the terms of the treaty, or to permit any portion of the army to leave the country. The Bala Hissar was evacuated by our troops on the 13th, but they were assailed by the insurgents on their route, and no small portion of the priceless provisions in their charge was lost. Supplies were furnished so scantily as not to satisfy hunger, and the Afghans were permitted to intercept them without any interference on the part of the chiefs; sometimes they were altogether withheld. The forts around the cantonment were surrendered, and the Afghans were seen squatting on the walls jeering at our misfortunes. The chiefs were allowed to go into the magazines and carry away whatever stores they liked, while the British officers and men watched the spoliation with swelling indignation. To complete the disasters of the force, snow began to fall on the 18th December, and was

Digitized by Google

lying many inches deep on the ground by the evening. If the troops had been enabled to move towards Jellalabad immediately on the signature of the treaty, they might have reached it as a military body, though attacked at every step of the way; but a new horror was now added to the difficulties of their position. The conduct of Sir William Macnaghten at this crisis, during the twelve days which elapsed between the signature of the treaty and his assassination, has been characterized by some, as not only dishonourable, but perfidious. It is certainly to be regretted that in the remote hope of saving the army from destruction, he should have allowed himself to be drawn into the filthy meshes of Afghan intrigue; but it must not be overlooked, that if the treaty bound him to repair to Peshawur with all practical expedition, it also bound the Afghan chiefs to furnish him with all possible assistance in carriage and provisions. The treaty was equally binding on both parties; he had faithfully fulfilled his part, as far as practicable, by ordering the evacuation of Jellalabad, Ghuzni, and Candahar, by surrendering the forts, and giving hostages, while Akbar Khan and the Barukzyes not only continued to withhold both carriage and provisions, but rose in their demands and insisted on the delivery of all our military stores and ammunition, and the surrender of the married families as additional hostages for the fulfilment of the treaty. In these circumstances, Sir William instructed the moonshee Mohun Lall to open negotiations with other tribes and to inform them that if any portion of the Afghans wished him to remain and would make this declaration to the Shah and send in provisions, he should feel himself at liberty to break with the faithless Barukzyes. In this communication he made the characteristic remark that "though it would be very agreeable to stop at Cabul a few months, he must not consider what was agreeable but what was consistent with good faith." If he had hesitated to depart after receiving sufficient supplies of cattle and provisions, he would have been justly chargeable with a breach of his engagement; but it is the mere wantonness of detrac-

Digitized by Google

tion to charge him with violating it when the other party intentionally kept him without the means of fulfilling it. There can, at the same time, however, be no doubt that while he lingered at Cabul and endeavoured to play off one party against another, he indulged a latent hope of some happy turn in the current of events which might enable him to rescue the garrison from perdition, and the British character from the ignominy of the treaty; but what other British functionary, with the same responsibilities, would have hesitated to adopt the same course?

Assassination of Sir William. 23rd Dec., 1841.

It was at this critical juncture, while Sir William Macnaghten was tossed upon a sea of difficulties, and bewildered by the appalling crisis which was approaching, that he was drawn into the net which Akbar Khan spread for his destruction. On the evening of the 22nd December, the wily Afghan sent two agents with Major Skinner, who was his prisoner, to the Envoy, with a proposal, to be considered at a conference the next day, that Akbar Khan and the Ghilzyes should unite with the British troops outside the cantonment and make a sudden attack on Mahomed Shah's fort and seize the person of Ameenoolla, the most hostile and ferocious of the insurgent chiefs, whose head was to be presented to the Envoy for a sum of money, but the offer was indignantly rejected by him. It was further proposed that the British force should remain till the spring, and then retire of its own accord: that the Shah should retain the title of king, and that Akbar Khan should be vizier, receiving from the British Government an annuity of four lacs of rupees a-year, and an immediate payment of thirty lacs. In an evil hour for his reputation and his safety, the Envoy accepted this treacherous proposal in a Persian paper drawn up with his own hand. When this wild overture was communicated to General Elphinstone and Captain Mackenzie the next morning, they both pronounced it to be a plot, and endeavoured to dissuade Sir William from going out to meet Akbar Khan. He replied in a hurried manner, "Let me alone for that, dan-

Digitized by Google

gerous though it be; if it succeeds it is worth all risks; the rebels have not fulfilled one article of the treaty, and I have no confidence in them, and if by it we can only save our honour, all will be well. At any rate, I would rather suffer a hundred deaths than live the last six weeks over again." At noon he directed the General to have two regiments and some guns ready for the attack of the fort, and then proceeded with Captains Trevor, Mackenzie, and Lawrence, with the slender protection of only sixteen of his body guard to the fatal meeting. At the distance of six hundred yards from the cantonment Akbar Khan had caused some horse cloths to be spread on the slope of a hill, where the snow lay less deep. The suspicions of the officers as they dismounted were roused by the appearance of Ameenoolla's brother at the conference, and the large number of armed followers who were present. Akbar Khan addressed a haughty salutation to Sir William, and immediately after, on a given signal, the officers were suddenly seized from behind, and placed separately on the saddle of an Afghan horseman, who galloped off to the city. Captain Trevor fell off the horse, and was hacked to pieces. Akbar Khan himself endeavoured to seize Sir William, who struggled vigorously, exclaiming in Persian, "For God's sake." Exasperated by this resistance, the fierce youth drew forth the pistol which Sir William had presented to him the day before, and shot him dead, when the *ghazees* rushed up, and mutilated his body with their knives. If his own repeated declaration be worthy of any credit, Akbar Khan had no intention of taking away the life of the Envoy, but was simply anxious to obtain possession of his person as a hostage for the Dost. Thus perished Sir William Macnaghten, the victim of an unsound and unjust policy, but as noble and brave a gentleman as ever fell in the service of his country. If he was in a false position in Afghanistan, it was because he had so completely identified himself with the policy which carried us across the Indus, as to be unable to perceive the magnitude of its errors and the certainty of its

Character of Sir W. Macnaghten, 1841.

Digitized by Google

failure. If he misled others regarding that policy, it was only after his own mind had been deceived. He attempted the task of establishing the permanent authority of foreigners and infidels in a wild and inaccessible country, inhabited by sturdy, lawless, and fanatical Mahomedans, and he failed. Whether there was any other officer in the service who would have proved more successful may well be doubted; but it certainly could not have been accomplished without entailing ruin on the finances of India. Throughout seven weeks of unparalleled difficulties, Sir William exhibited a spirit of courage and constancy of which there are few examples in the history of the Company. He was the only civilian at Cabul, and he was one of the truest-hearted soldiers in the garrison. If he was at length drawn into a fatal negotiation with Akbar, not altogether in accordance with the high standard of English morals, let it not in all candour be forgotten that no public officer since the establishment of British power in the east, has ever been called to pass through so fiery an ordeal; that the unexampled strain of the three preceding days had evidently disturbed the balance of his mind, and that he risked his own honour and life to save the lives of fifteen thousand of his fellow creatures.

Energetic advice of Major Pottinger, 1841.

No effort was made from the cantonment to avenge the murder of the Envoy, or to recover his mangled remains, which were paraded in triumph through the city of Cabul. Major Pottinger had been unnoticed since his arrival in a wounded state from Charekar, but all eyes were now turned on him to fill the political post of the late Envoy, and he summoned a council, at which were present General Elphinstone, Brigadier Shelton, and two senior officers, to discuss the terms on which the Afghan chiefs now offered to grant the army a safe conduct to Peshawur. They differed from those to which the late Envoy had given his consent only in the demand of larger gratuities to themselves. Major Pottinger recoiled from these humiliating conditions; he asserted that the former treaty had been cancelled by the foul murder of Sir

Digitized by Google

William, and he urged the officers to reject the terms with scorn and defiance. His energy might yet have saved the garrison, but the council of war refused to fight, and resolved to accept the proposed treaty, at whatever sacrifice of honour or money. Orders were therefore signed by Major Pottinger and General Elphinstone to the commanders at Jellalabad, Ghuzni and Candahar to surrender the forts to the Afghans who might be deputed to demand them, and retire from the country. The confederate chiefs, as might have been expected, immediately rose in their demands, and required that all the coin and the spare muskets and guns, save six, should be surrendered, and that General Sale, his wife and his daughter, and all the other officers of rank who were married and had families, should be left in the country as hostages for Dost Mahomed. On the 26th, letters arrived from Jellalabad and Peshawur stating that reinforcements were on the way from Hindostan, and imploring the garrison to hold out. There were, moreover, intestine feuds among the Afghan chiefs; Shah Soojah appeared to be regaining some portion of his influence, and Major Pottinger seized the occasion of this gleam of sunshine to dissuade the General and the Brigadier from treating with enemies who would be sure to betray them, and he implored them to make one bold and prompt effort either to occupy the Bala Hissar, or to cut their way to Jellalabad. The General was almost persuaded to adopt this advice, but Brigadier Shelton, the evil genius of the cantonment, vehemently contended that both courses were equally impracticable, and that it was more advisable to pay any sum of money than to risk the safety of the force in such attempts. The Major, mortified and humiliated, was constrained to proceed with the treaty; but he informed the chiefs that no pecuniary transactions could be completed without the presence of Captain Lawrence, the secretary of the late Envoy. He was accordingly released, and returned to the cantonment, where he drew bills to the extent of fourteen lacs of rupees on the Government of India, but made them payable after the safe arrival of the force at

Digitized by Google

Peshawur, which the Afghan chiefs professed to guarantee, but had determined to prevent. By this stroke of policy, he inflicted on them a just penalty for their treachery, and relieved his own Government from the necessity of honouring the bills. Guns, waggons, small arms, and ammunition were then given up amidst the indignant exclamations of the garrison, and four officers were surrendered as hostages. On the 4th January, the ratified treaty with the seals of eighteen of the Afghan chiefs was sent in. It was dictated in a spirit of arrogance, and received with a spirit of humility which no British officers had exhibited since the day of Plassy, and it was violated without any scruple. With the treaty came also intimations from the city of the preparations which were in progress to assail the force as soon as it quitted the cantonments, and of the oath which Akbar Khan had taken to annihilate every soldier but one, who was to be permitted to reach Jellalabad to tell the tale.

Retreat of the Army, 1842.

On the 6th January the army, still 4,500 strong, with 11,000 camp followers, after having for sixty-five days endured such indignities as no British soldiers had ever before suffered in India, began its ominous march from the cantonments, leaving all its trophies in the hands of an insolent foe. The snow lay ankle deep on the ground, and the salvation of the force depended on the rapidity of its movements. If it had crossed the Cabul river before noon, and pushed on with promptitude to the Khoord Cabul pass, it might have escaped destruction; but owing to the indecision and mismanagement of the General, the rear guard did not leave the gate before the shades of night came on. The Afghan fanatics then rushed in, and set the cantonments on fire, and lighted up this first night of horrors with the blaze. In the morning the spirit of discipline began to wane, and the force was no longer a retreating army, but a panic stricken and disorganized rabble. The infuriated Ghilzyes pressed on the rear, seizing the baggage and cutting down all who opposed them. Safety was to be found only in speed, but, through the unac-

Digitized by Google

countable folly of the military authorities, the troops were halted on the second night at Bootkhak. The crowd of men, women, and children, horses and camels, lying in the snow in wild confusion, without food, or fuel, or shelter, presented a scene of unexampled misery. Akbar Khan now made his appearance and demanded fresh hostages for the safe conduct of the force to Tezeen, and Captain Lawrence, Captain Colin Mackenzie, and Major Pottinger were delivered up to him. Between Bootkhak and Tezeen lay the terrific gorge of the Khoord Cabul, five miles in length, so narrow that the rays of the sun seldom penetrated its recesses. At the bottom of it ran an impetuous torrent, which the road crossed and recrossed twenty-eight times, and it was through this fearful defile that the disordered mass of human beings pressed on with one maddening desire of escaping destruction. But the Ghilzyes poured an incessant fire from their unerring rifles upon the crowd from every height, and three thousand perished under their weapons, and through the intensity of the cold. It was in this scene of indiscriminate carnage, that English ladies, some with infants in their arms, had to run the gauntlet of Afghan bullets amidst a heavy fall of snow.

Continued disasters, 1841.

In the morning Akbar again made his appearance, and offered a supply of provisions and advised the General to halt. The whole force exclaimed against this insane delay, but he was deaf to all entreaties, and the perishing troops were constrained to sit down idle for an entire day in the snow, when another march would have cleared the defile. Akbar offered likewise to take charge of the ladies and children and convey them to Peshawur. They had scarcely tasted food since leaving Cabul; they were insufficiently clad and without any shelter from the frost and snow. Major Pottinger, now Akbar's prisoner, felt that it would be impossible for them to survive such hardships, and was anxious that they should be relieved from the horrors of their situation. In accordance with his advice, Lady Macnaghten, Lady Sale, and nine other ladies, with fifteen children, and eight officers were

Digitized by Google

sent to Akbar's camp, and thus rescued from destruction. On the morning of the 10th, the remains of the army resumed the march, but before evening the greater number of the sepoys had disappeared. Panic stricken and paralyzed with cold, they were slaughtered like sheep by the remorseless Ghilzyes and a narrow defile between two hills was choked up with the dying and the dead. Four hundred and fifty Europeans, with a considerable body of officers, yet remained, but the enemy took post on every point, blocked up every ravine, and dealt death among their ranks, while Akbar himself hovered over their flank, and, when implored to put an end to the slaughter, declared that it was beyond his power to restrain the fury of these hill men. He proposed, however, that the remnant of the troops should lay down their arms, and surrender, but even General Elphinstone revolted from this indignity. The march was therefore resumed, and Brigadier Shelton with his accustomed gallantry repelled every attack. On approaching Jugdulluk, a conference was held with Akbar Khan, who still continued to hang upon the rear, and he promised to send in water and provisions to the famished men, on condition that General Elphinstone, Brigadier Shelton, and Captain Johnson should be transferred to him as hostages for the evacuation of Jellalabad. They were accordingly given up, but this concession brought no respite from the ferocity of the Ghilzyes, in whom the thirst for blood had overcome even the love of money. They resisted the most tempting offers, and openly revelled in the prospect of cutting the throats of all the Feringees who were left. Akbar Khan, having obtained possession of the ladies and the principal officers, abandoned the rest of the army to their vengeance, and retired to Cabul. At the Jugdulluk pass twelve of the bravest of the officers met their doom, and here the Cabul force may be said to have ceased to exist. Twenty officers and forty-five European soldiers contrived to reach Gundamuk, but they gradually dropped down under the weapons of their foes, with the exception of one officer, Dr. Brydon, who was descried from the ramparts of

Digitized by Google

Jellalabad on the 13th January, slowly wending his way to the fort, wounded and exhausted, on his jaded pony, the sole survivor, with the exception of a hundred and twenty in captivity, of a body of 15,000 men.

Total destruction of the force, 1842.

Character and effects of this catastrophe, 1842.

The entire annihilation of this large army was the heaviest blow which had ever fallen upon the British power in India. But it did not produce any such demonstrations of hostility at the native courts, or any such fermentation in the community as might have been expected, by comparison with the effect created by the destruction of Monson's army in 1804, or by our failures in Nepaul in 1814, or our non-success in Burmah in 1824. The sensation created in the native states and among our native subjects, at each of the successive shocks which have affected our prestige in India, appears to have gradually become more and more moderate. This may be attributed not merely to the extinction of the military power of the native rulers, but to that feeling of acquiescence which time scarcely fails to produce in an established Government which is felt to be equitable and mild beyond all former example, and affords ample protection to industry, and full scope for the general pursuit of happiness, and to which there is no other objection than that it is a Government of foreigners. This conclusion was still more clearly exemplified during the great Sepoy mutiny of 1857, which, if it had occurred forty years before, would unquestionably have been followed by the temporary loss of the empire, but which produced no conspiracies at the native courts of Hyderabad, Indore, Baroda, or Gwalior, and scarcely any ebullitions of hostile feeling, except in the districts in which our authority was entirely extinguished. In the case of this Afghan disaster, moreover, the chiefs and people of India awaited a demonstration of the efforts we should make to vindicate our military character. Such adversity was not new in the history of the country. Two centuries and a-half before this period, a Mogul army of equal, if not greater

Digitized by Google

magnitude, had been engulfed in these same defiles, and only two men survived to tell the tale, but the Emperor immediately despatched a more powerful force under his ablest generals to the scene of humiliation, and his reputation was at once restored, and his authority re-established. Nor did the native princes forget that in the British period of history, the sack of Calcutta in 1756 was avenged by the conquest of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, and that Colonel Monson's disastrous retreat in 1804 was immediately followed by the pursuit of Holkar, the victory of Deeg, and the extinction of his battalions. The promptitude with which we had repaired our misfortunes on those occasions had served to brighten our reputation, and there could be no doubt that similar efforts would produce similar results in 1842.

Despondency and weakness of Lord Auckland, 1842.

Unhappily, at this period there was no Wellesley at the head of the state, and Lord Auckland was not equal to the crisis. He was completely bewildered and prostrated by the magnitude of the calamity, and, instead of determining boldly to retrieve our honour by putting forth the strength of the empire, he allowed its fortunes to drift down the stream with the current of circumstances. He knew that his proceedings in Afghanistan were unanimously reprobated by the India House, and by the Tory Ministry which had recently returned to Downing Street. He was on the eve of relinquishing the government, and the prospect of handing it over to his successor, who had emphatically denounced his Afghan policy, just at the period when it had miserably collapsed, augmented his confusion. On hearing of the siege and peril of the cantonment, he wrote to the Commander-in-chief, Sir Jasper Nicholls, that it was not clear to him how the march of a brigade, for which the officers on the frontier were importunate, could produce any influence on the events which were passing at Cabul, and that "if all should be lost there, he would not encounter new hazards for the purpose of re-conquest." This imbecile policy was fully upheld by the Commander-in-chief, who had always expressed

Digitized by Google

a strong disapprobation of the war. The news of the extinction of the force was received in Calcutta on the 30th January; it roused Lord Auckland from the state of morbid despondency into which he had sunk, and he issued a declaration, stating that "The Governor-General in Council regarded the partial reverse which had overtaken a body of British troops in a country removed by distance and difficulties of season from the possibility of succour, as a new occasion for displaying the stability and vigour of the British power, and the admirable spirit and valour of the British Indian Army." But after this spasmodic flush of energy, he relapsed into an unhealthy feeling of dejection, and wrote to the Commander-in-chief, that, as the main inducement for maintaining the post of Jellalabad, as a point of support for any troops escaping from Cabul, had now passed away, his only object was to withdraw General Sale to Peshawur. Instead of considering how to restore our military superiority, the sole basis on which our position in India rests, he was prepared to leave it without vindication, and considered only by what means he might most speedily wash his hands of Afghanistan.

Mr. Robertson and Mr. George Clerk, 1842.

But there were two officers in the north-west as fully alive to the exigencies of the crisis, as the Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief were dead to them; Mr. Robertson, formerly the Commissioner in Burmah, and now the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra, and Mr.—subsequently Sir George—Clerk, who exerted themselves with extraordinary energy to push on reinforcements and supplies. On Mr. Clerk devolved the duty of forwarding through the Punjab the regiments which had been appointed to relieve those returning from Afghanistan, and his able assistant, Captain—afterwards Sir Henry—Lawrence, now urged them on with redoubled vigour. Their exertions, however, were neutralized by the unhappy choice of a commander, which did not rest with them, and the brigade, instead of being placed under the orders of the most energetic officer which the service could furnish, was sent for-

Digitized by Google

Colonel Wild's Brigade, 1842.

ward under Colonel Wild, into whom the Commander-in-chief said he would endeavour to infuse some degree of energy. By a fatality to which we had become accustomed in everything connected with Afghanistan, the brigade was despatched without cavalry or cannon, in the vague hope that the Sikhs might be induced to accommodate it with some ordnance. The Colonel crept through the Punjab at a snail-like pace, and was thirty-five days in reaching Peshawur, whereas five years before, when Runjeet Sing had met with reverses in Afghanistan, one of his European officers marched over the same ground, short of fifty miles, in twelve days. Colonel Wild had doubtless many difficulties to encounter, but the most serious impediment to his progress was the lack of that vigour with which other soldiers would have conquered them. His sepoys, on their arrival at Peshawur, were eager to advance, but he lingered at that station till they had become thoroughly demoralized by the example of their Sikh auxiliaries. Shere Sing, the successor of Runjeet Sing, had sent positive injunctions to General Avitabile who commanded at Peshawur, and to his native generals to co-operate with the British brigade, and to "earn a name by their zealous services which should be known in London;" but the Sikh soldiers, as already stated, had an instinctive dread of the Afghan passes, and although Major Mackeson had advanced a lac and a-half of rupees for their services, they intercepted one of the guns which had been sent over to Colonel Wild, and threatened to put General Avitabile to death and return to Lahore. They were induced, however, to advance to Jumrood at the entrance of the pass, but they had no sooner looked in, than they turned round to a man, and marched back to Peshawur, when General Avitabile shut the gates upon them, and retired to the citadel. Colonel Wild then ventured into the pass alone, but the rickety guns the Sikhs had lent him, broke down on the first discharge, and his sepoys lost heart, and allowed themselves to be ignominiously chased back, leaving their cannon in the possession of the Afreedis.

Digitized by Google

General Pollock's Brigade, 1842.

Meanwhile, Mr. Clerk was urging the Commander-in-chief, then in the north-west provinces, and the Governor-General to despatch a second brigade to the relief of the army, which was still supposed to be holding its ground at Cabul. Lord Auckland was reluctant to allow it to proceed, but the indomitable zeal of Mr. Clerk bore down every obstacle, and a force of 3,000 men, including a European regiment crossed the Sutlege on the 4th January. The selection of the officer to command it was the solitary instance of wisdom exhibited by the military authorities in this emergency. It fell on General Pollock, an old artillery officer, who had campaigned with Lord Lake, assisted in the first siege of Bhurtpore, commanded the horse artillery in pursuit of Holkar, taken an active share in the Nepaul war, and commanded the Bengal artillery in Burmah in 1824. Forty years of service had enlarged his experience, and matured his judgment without impairing his energy. His sagacity, caution, and collectedness, combined with great decision of character, qualified him in a pre-eminent degree for the arduous task which had now to be performed. On the 22nd January, after the entire destruction of the Cabul force had been announced, Mr. Clerk met Sir Jasper Nicholls at Thanesur to discuss the measures which it was advisable to adopt at this crisis. The Commander-in-chief considered that this catastrophe furnished no reason for pushing forward further reinforcements, and that as the retention of Jellalabad was no longer necessary for the safety of the Cabul force, the withdrawal of Sir Robert Sale's brigade was the only object which ought now to engage the attention of Government. Mr. Clerk, in a spirit more worthy of a Briton, maintained that the national reputation and the safety of British interests in the east required that the garrison of Jellalabad should be strengthened with fresh troops, to enable it to march to Cabul simultaneously with the Candahar force from the westward, and inflict a signal retribution upon the Afghans on the theatre of their recent successes, and then withdraw from Afghanistan with dignity and

Digitized by Google

undiminished renown. He could not brook the idea of leaving them to revel in the annihilation of a British army, and the humiliation of British honour. The energy of this appeal was successful, and a third brigade was directed to be held in readiness to advance into Afghanistan. But, in the latest communication addressed by Lord Auckland to the Secret Committee, he stated that his directions in regard to the immediate withdrawal of the brigade from Jellalabad into our own provinces, were clear and positive, and in his last letter to General Pollock informed him that the paramount object of his proceedings at Peshawur should be to "secure the safe return of our people and troops, now detained beyond the Indus."

Close of Lord Auckland's Administration, 1842.

The arrival of Lord Ellenborough at Calcutta on the 28th February, brought Lord Auckland's melancholy administration to a close. It comprised a single series of events—the conquest, the occupation, and the loss of Afghanistan. He likewise wrote a benevolent minute on education; he sanctioned the substitution of solemn declarations for judicial oaths, a measure of doubtful expediency; and he endeavoured to promote the interests of science, for which he had a natural turn, but for administrative or material progress he had no leisure, and they remained for six years in a state of comparative abeyance. His administration commenced with a surplus revenue of a crore and a-half of rupees, and it closed with a deficit of two millions, and a large addition to the debt. It was, however, rendered memorable in the history of India, by the termination of the connection Government had maintained for many years with the establishments of idolatry, which was a scandal to the pious Christian, and offensive to the religious Hindoo. The views of the Court of Directors on the subject of religious observances after their functions had been limited to the imperial duty of governing India in 1833, were communicated to the local authorities in an able despatch drawn up by Mr. Charles Grant, the President of the Board of

Idol Temples, 1842.

Digitized by Google

Control. The natives of India were assured that the Government would never fail to protect them in the exercise of their privileges, and to manifest a liberal regard to their feelings, in all cases in which their religious rites and offices were not flagrantly opposed to the rules of common humanity and decency. But the interference of British functionaries in the interior management of native temples, in the customs, habits, and religious proceedings of their priests, and in the arrangement of their ceremonies and festivals, was to cease. The pilgrim tax was everywhere to be abolished. Fines and offerings were no longer to be considered sources of public revenue, and no servant of the Company was to be engaged in the collection, management, or custody of them. In all matters relative to their temples, their worship, their festivals, their religious practices and their ceremonial observances, the natives were to be left entirely to themselves. These orders were tardily obeyed in Bengal, and it was not till seven years after they had been issued, that the management of the temple of Juggunnath was restored to the raja of Khoorda, its hereditary custodian, and that the pilgrim tax at the various shrines was relinquished, though not without an unbecoming reluctance at the loss of the three lacs of rupees a-year it yielded to the treasury. At Madras, which, from the obtuse feelings of its public functionaries in long and unbroken succession had come to be designated the "benighted Presidency," a morbid homage had been paid for half a century to native superstitions, and it required an objurgatory missive from the Court of Directors, of which Mr. Butterworth Bayley was then Chairman, to suppress the attendance of troops and military bands at idolatrous festivals, the firing of salutes on the birthdays of the gods, and the decoration of images, and the presentation of offerings, on the part of the East India Company.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S ADMINISTRATION—CLOSE OF THE AFGHAN WAR, 1842.

Lord Ellenborough Governor-General, 1842.

LORD ELLENBOROUGH who now assumed the reins of Government was a statesman of high repute, and an eloquent speaker; and his style was as clear and vigorous, as that of his predecessor was, for a Governor-General, exceptionally confused and feeble. He had for some years taken a special interest in the affairs of India, and a prominent part in Indian debates, more especially during the discussions of the last Charter. Like Lord Wellesley and Lord Minto he had served his apprenticeship to the government of India at the Board of Control, where he had acquired an ample knowledge of the condition of the country, and the principles and policy of the Company's administration. He was reported to be a good man of business and a moderate Tory, and his appointment was welcomed with delight in a country where the animosities of political party are scarcely heard of, and the public care about nothing but progress. He was known to possess great energy and decision of character, and the community augured a happy change from the weak and vacillating policy of his predecessor. His address at the entertainment given him by the Court of Directors at the London tavern created great expectations of the beneficence of his administration. He abjured all thoughts of warlike or aggressive policy, and announced his determination to cultivate the arts of peace, to emulate the magnificent benevolence of Mahomedan conquerors, and to elevate and improve the condition of the people.

General Pollock's advance, 1842.

General Pollock arrived at Peshawur on the 5th February, and found the four regiments

Digitized by Google

of infantry which had preceded him in a state of total insubordination. This was the first mutiny which had occurred in the native army since 1824, and it arose from the seductions and the example of the Sikh troops, and the dread of service in Afghanistan. Many of the sepoys had deserted their colours, and nightly meetings had been held in the camp at which the mutineers encouraged each other in the determination not to enter the Khyber. Efforts were likewise made to debauch the newly arrived regiments, and brahmins were sent round to bind them to the same resolution by an oath on the water of the Ganges; but the General ordered every emissary found in the lines to be seized and expelled, and acted with such promptitude and energy as to put a speedy end to these machinations. Nor did the officers manifest much less reluctance to encounter the difficulties of the march, and it was openly declared at the mess table that it would be better to sacrifice the whole of Sir Robert Sale's brigade than to risk the safety of a fresh army. One officer went so far as to affirm that he should consider it his duty strenuously to dissuade the sepoys from moving into the pass. The difficulties of General Pollock's course were indefinitely aggravated by these demonstrations. Sir Robert Sale was importuning him to advance without delay to his relief, but the General felt that, with a force so entirely demoralized, one half in hospital and the other half in a state of mutiny, he could not move without the risk of a second failure, which would have been fatal to the hopes of the Jellalabad garrison. Being obliged to wait for further reinforcements, he devoted the months of February and March to the task of improving the discipline, recovering the health, and reviving the confidence of his troops, which was strengthened in no ordinary degree by the arrival of a regiment of dragoons and some troops of European horse artillery. Raja Golab Sing had been sent with some of his own Jummoo battalions to assume the command of the Sikh army, and to curb the insolence of the Sikh troops, and Shere Sing, the successor of Runjeet

Digitized by Google

Sing had given him positive and unequivocal orders to afford every possible assistance to General Pollock. But Golab Sing had been withdrawn most reluctantly from the pursuit of his own ambitious schemes in the regions lying beyond Cashmere, and his feelings were so lukewarm and his efforts so perfunctory as to lay him open to the suspicion of treachery. An effort was therefore made by the British Agent to counteract it by the offer of Jellalabad as an independent principality. At length the masterly arrangements and resolute bearing of General Pollock completely overcame the dread with which the Sikhs regarded the Khyber, and secured the active co-operation of the raja. Major Mackeson, the political agent, had offered the Khyberrees the sum of 50,000 rupees for a passage through their defiles, but they immediately rose in their demands, which were flatly rejected. They then proceeded to block up the entrance of the pass with huge stones and branches of trees cemented together with clay, and covered the mountains on either side with assailants whose matchlocks carried death to the distance of eight hundred yards. But the admirable plan which General Pollock devised for mastering the pass by sending two columns to crown the heights on the right and the left, and clear them of the Afghans, baffled all their efforts to guard this formidable barrier.

Entrance of the Khyber, 1842.

At three in the morning of the 5th April, the troops moved out of the camp, without beat of drum or sound of bugle, and clambered up the rugged and precipitous crags with great enthusiasm, and the dawn of day revealed their presence to the thunderstruck Afreedis on the summit of their own mountains. A sharp conflict ensued, but the British troops had the advantage of confidence as well as valour, and the Afghans were soon perceived to fly precipitately in every direction over their hills. Both the columns then descended into the valley, and the defenders of the pass, finding themselves attacked both in rear and in front, deserted their position in haste and confusion, and the pass was opened to the long string of baggage, which, including the munitions of war

Digitized by Google

and provisions for Sir Robert Sale's brigade, extended two miles in length. By the evening, the army and the convoy reached the fort of Ali Musjid, five miles within the pass. No further opposition was offered to the advance of General Pollock, who reached Jellalabad on the 15th April and found that the illustrious garrison had already achieved its own relief.

Sir Robert Sale at Jellalabad, 1842.

Jellalabad was the capital of Western Afghanistan, selected for the mildness of its climate as the winter residence of the rulers of Cabul, and not inferior in importance to Candahar and Ghuzni. Sir Robert Sale entered it on the 13th November with provisions for only two days. He found that the fortifications were in a state of complete dilapidation, and that rubbish had been allowed to accumulate to such an extent around the ramparts that there were paths over them in many places into the country. Immediately beyond the walls, were ruined forts, walls, mosques, and gardens, which afforded cover for assailants at the distance of only twenty or thirty yards, and the inhabitants both in the town and the country were as hostile as the Ghilzyes. The day after the occupation of the town, the armed population of the neighbourhood, to the number of 5,000, advanced towards the walls with yells and imprecations on the infidels, when Sir Robert determined to give them a sharp and decisive lesson. Colonel Monteith issued from the gate at the head of about 1,100 men, of all arms; the artillery cannonaded the enemy; the infantry broke their ranks; the cavalry completed their discomfiture, and, in a short time not an Afghan was to be seen, with the exception of those who lay dead on the field. Captain Broadfoot, who had accompanied the brigade with his sappers and miners, was an officer of indomitable energy, and extraordinary resources, with a remarkable genius for war and policy. He was immediately appointed garrison engineer, and commenced the task of clearing and strengthening the fortifications without delay. The whole of the 13th Foot was turned into a working party; a spirit of zeal and emula-

Digitized by Google

tion was kindled throughout the garrison, and an indefensible mass of ruins was in a short time converted into a fortress proof against every thing but siege artillery. On the 9th January a horseman rode up to the walls with the order which Major Pottinger and General Elphinstone had written at the dictation of the chiefs for the evacuation of Jellalabad. The officers were unanimous in replying that as Akbar Khan had sent a proclamation to the chiefs in the valley to raise their followers and destroy the force, while the Cabul convention provided for their safe escort through the country, they considered it their duty to await further communication from the political and military chief in Afghanistan.

Councils of War, 1842.

At the close of January a letter was received from Shah Soojah as the ostensible head of the Government in Cabul, demanding the evacuation of Jellalabad, in accordance with the terms of the treaty. It was written in red official ink, but he stated in a private communication that it had been signed under compulsion. A council of war was held, when Sir Robert Sale and Captain Macgregor, the political agent, who had doubtless been informed of the anxiety of Lord Auckland to escape from the country at the earliest moment, advised that the requisition to abandon Jellalabad should be complied with under certain specified conditions. This proposal was vigorously opposed by Captain Broadfoot, who characterized it as detestable; but his opinion was weakened by his impetuosity. The debate was so stormy that the council wisely determined to adjourn to the following day, when Captain Broadfoot produced a paper in support of his views, drawn up by his friend, Captain Havelock, in his usual calm, clear and decisive language. During the discussion which ensued, the political agent endeavoured to support his opinion by the remark, that the Government of India had abandoned the garrison, that no attempt would be made to relieve them after the failure of Colonel Wild, and that it was impossible for them to hold their position much longer. To this Captain Broadfoot replied, that if their own Government

Digitized by Google

had thus deserted them, the covenant between the two parties was cancelled, but they had a duty to perform to their country, that of upholding its honour at the present crisis, from which nothing could absolve them. The majority of the council, however, determined to adopt the advice of the political agent, but resisted the indignity of giving hostages, which had formed part of the proposal. A reply to this effect was accordingly sent to Cabul, with the understanding that if the communication from the Shah and the chiefs was a simple acceptance of the terms, the garrison would be bound to evacuate the town and the country, but if it were clogged with any conditions, or appeared evasive, they should be at liberty to adopt whatever course circumstances might dictate. The answer from Cabul required the officers to testify their sincerity by affixing their seals to the document. Another council was held, and Sir Robert Sale and the political agent called upon the officers to comply with this request. Captain Broadfoot urged that the suspicion of their sincerity liberated them from any obligation to confirm the treaty, and he proposed that the whole question of capitulation should be reopened. Some of the officers, under the influence of Broadfoot and Havelock, had repented of their former pusillanimity. A recent foray had been successful in supplying them with nearly nine hundred head of cattle; the officers were in fine feather, and the majority voted against any renewal of the negotiations. The next day letters were received from General Pollock conveying the pleasing intelligence that reinforcements were advancing from India, and all idea of abandoning their post was at once and finally dismissed.

The great earthquake, 1842.

On the 18th February, a succession of earthquakes destroyed in a few minutes the labour of three months. The parapets were thrown down, the bastions seriously injured, and one of the gates reduced to a mass of ruins. The effects of this visitation were too severely felt in the country around to allow the enemy to take advantage of the defenceless state to which Jellalabad was

Digitized by Google

reduced, and the damage was repaired with such promptitude that the Afghans declared it was impossible the earthquake could have been felt there. Akbar Khan now made his appearance on the scene. If he had been able to advance at once from Cabul with the guns he had obtained in the cantonments, while his troops were flushed with success, the peril of the garrison would have been extreme; but he was happily detained at the capital by differences with the chiefs, and on his arrival found that the defences had been restored, the fosse completed, and a store of provisions laid in. He found also that he had no longer to deal with men like General Elphinstone and Brigadier Shelton, or with a force sunk in despondency, but with commanders and men full of animation and confidence, and he prudently abstained from too near an approach to the ramparts. On the 11th March, however, he was emboldened to draw out his army, and advance to the attack of the town, but the whole garrison sallied forth and assaulted him with such impetuosity as to drive him ignominiously from the field. He resolved, therefore, to turn the siege into a blockade, with the hope of starving the force into submission. This strategy, which had been successful at Cabul, rendered the situation of the garrison extremely critical; the cattle were perishing for want of fodder, the men were on reduced rations of salt meat; the officers were on short commons, and the ammunition had begun to run low. On the 1st April, the troops sallied forth and swept into the town five hundred sheep and goats they had seen from the bastions for several days grazing in the plain, and thus supplied themselves with food for ten days. Akbar Khan had been gradually drawing his camp nearer to the town, in order to cut off foraging parties, and at length pitched it with 6,000 troops, within two miles of the ramparts. Captain Havelock had repeatedly and strenuously urged on General Sale the necessity of a bold attack on his encampment, as affording the only hope of relieving the garrison from its perils, but he had resolutely resisted the proposal.

Digitized by Google

Defeat of Akbar Khan, 7th April, 1842.

On the evening of the 6th, the General yielded to the importunity of the officers who entertained the same opinion as Captain Havelock of the necessity of an energetic assault on the enemy's encampment. The plan of the engagement was laid down by the captain, and provided that the force should move out in three columns, and, without noticing the little forts which studded the intermediate space, make a sudden and vigorous attack on Akbar Khan, and drive his army into the river, which was then a rapid and unfordable torrent. The troops issued from the gate at dawn on the 7th April, but at the distance of three quarters of a mile from it, a flanking fire was opened from one of the forts on the centre column, commanded by Sir Robert Sale in person, and he ordered Colonel Dennie to storm it. The Colonel rushed forward with his usual gallantry, but was mortally wounded in endeavouring to penetrate the fort. This false movement not only entailed the sacrifice of a valuable officer, but had well nigh marred the enterprise. The advance column of 360 men led by Captain Havelock, moved on towards the enemy's encampment, and was thus exposed, without support, to the impetuous assault of Akbar's splendid cavalry, 1,500 in number; but they repelled two charges, and drove the assailants back to their camp. Repeated and earnest messages were sent for the advance of the two other columns which had been detained around the fort, and their timely arrival completed the victory. The enemy were dislodged from every point, and pursued to the river with the loss of their guns, equipage and ammunition, and their camp was given up to the flames. Akbar Khan disappeared, and the neighbouring chiefs hastened to make their submission; the villagers poured in provisions, and General Pollock, on his arrival, a week after, found the garrison in exuberant spirits and robust health. One such day at Cabul would have saved the army.

State of affairs at Candahar, 1841—1842.

Immediately after the outbreak at Cabul, the chiefs despatched Atta Mahomed to raise Western

Digitized by Google

Afghanistan, and General Nott deemed it prudent to withdraw his detachments from the outlying districts, and concentrate his force in Candahar. Major Rawlinson endeavoured to get up a movement among the Dooranees in favour of Shah Soojah, the head of their own tribe, and bound the chiefs by solemn oaths to remain faithful in their allegiance, but their fidelity was shaken by the report industriously spread that he himself was hostile to the continuance of British authority in Afghanistan. The Shah's cavalry, the Janbaz, who had in every instance proved insubordinate, went into open revolt, murdered their officers, and joined the camp of Atta Mahomed. Soon after, the Shah's own son, Sufder Jung, decamped from Candahar, and placed himself at the head of the insurgents, who, after having been engaged for some weeks in making preparations, at length moved down to attack the city and encamped within five miles of it. On the 12th January, General Nott marched out with five regiments of infantry and one of cavalry, and in an engagement which did not last more than twenty minutes, inflicted a signal defeat on them. The flame of rebellion however continued to spread through the country, and all the Dooranee chiefs threw off the mask, and openly joined the insurgents. Mirza Ahmed, the ablest man in Western Afghanistan, who had hitherto enjoyed the entire confidence of Major Rawlinson, and had been entrusted by him with large sums, went over to the enemy and assumed the direction of their movements; but the hostile camp was a prey to intestine dissensions. The Dooranee chiefs had always been at feud with each other, and it required all the extraordinary tact of the Mirza to keep these discordant elements from explosion. The British troops, on the contrary, were cheerful in the confidence of their strength, and sustained their health and spirits by games and amusements, while at the same time the General employed himself in improving the fortifications, and laying in provisions for five months. The insurgent chiefs and Sufder Jung at length sent to demand the evacuation of Candahar in conformity with the order which

Digitized by Google

Major Pottinger and General Elphinstone had signed two months before, under compulsion. General Nott and Major Rawlinson rejected the demand with scorn, and refused to enter into any negotiations for the evacuation of the country till they had received instructions from their own Government, written after the murder of the Envoy was known. It was deemed advisable to make a vigorous effort to break up the Afghan camp which continued to hover round the city. To prevent any insurrectionary movement within, a thousand Afghan families were expelled, after which General Nott marched out on the 10th March to encounter the enemy. Under the subtle advice of Mirza Ahmed, the Afghan leaders contrived to draw him to a distance from the city while they doubled back in the hope of capturing it during his absence. That chief and Sufder Jung arrived at sunset at the Herat gate, where their emissaries had been employed for some hours in heaping up brushwood saturated with oil. It blazed up as soon as the torch was applied to it, and the *ghazees*, enfuriated with fanaticism and drugs, rushed forward with hideous yells, and seemed to court death with the courage of martyrs. The wild confusion of the scene was increased by the pitch darkness of the night, and the post was defended for five hours with great skill and energy by Major Lane and Major Rawlinson. Two guns were brought to bear on the enemy, and a number of grain bags were piled up behind the gate, which fell outwards about nine in the evening, when the *ghazees* rushed forward and with frantic fury, climbed up the mound of bags, but so vigorous was the defence that all their efforts were rendered vain. Towards midnight their violence seemed to be exhausted and they retired with their wounded, venting curses on Mirza Ahmed and were with difficulty restrained from laying violent hands on him, for having inveigled them into an enterprise which had cost the lives of six hundred true believers.

Fall of Ghuzni, 1842.

Soon after, intelligence was received that Colonel Palmer, after holding Ghuzni for four

Digitized by Google

months with a regiment of native infantry, had surrendered it to the Afghans. There was a general impression that this capitulation was even more disgraceful than that of Cabul, and that under an officer of greater ability and decision, the post might have been maintained with ease till it was relieved, and this opinion was fully confirmed when General Nott subsequently had an opportunity of examining the defences. Great gloom was also diffused through the garrison of Candahar by the repulse and retreat of General England. He had reached Quettah with a convoy of provisions, ammunition and money, and some additional troops for General Nott, and was strongly advised to await the reinforcements which were then on their way from below to join him. But he persisted in advancing into the Pisheen valley, and on the 28th March reached the village of Hykulzye, where he had been warned to expect some opposition. A body of 500 of his sepoys approached a slight elevation with a breastwork consisting of a mound of earth thrown up from a ditch four feet deep, when the enemy suddenly sprung up from behind it, and poured a destructive fire on them, which brought down a hundred killed and wounded. Their comrades recoiled from this unexpected discharge, but rallied immediately after, and were eager to be led on to the attack. Colonel Stacy thrice volunteered to carry the sunga, or breastwork, with a hundred, or even with eighty men, but the Brigadier would listen to no entreaty, and hastened back to Quettah, where he actually began to throw up entrenchments, as if he expected to be attacked. It was subsequently ascertained that the entire number of the enemy at Hykulzye, who had occasioned this disgraceful retreat did not greatly exceed a thousand. From Quettah, he wrote to General Nott: "Whenever it so happens that you retire bodily in this direction, and that I am informed of it, I feel assured that I shall be able to make an advantageous diversion in your favour." General Nott's temper was never remarkable for its suavity at the best of times; but it entirely broke down under the provocation of this unmanly exhibition, and he

Repulse of General England, 1842.

Digitized by Google

ordered the Brigadier to advance without the least delay to Candahar, where the supplies under his charge were imperatively needed. On reaching the scene of his former repulse, the troops rushed forward impetuously to retrieve their honour, and carried the breastworks with perfect ease. The Brigadier soon after reached the defile which leads to the Kojuck pass, and calling for a chair, coolly seated himself in it, and resisted the entreaties of his officers who were impatient to secure the honour of mastering it; nor would he allow his brigade to move till he heard that it was in possession of Colonel Wymer, whom General Nott had sent from Candahar to meet him.

Lord Ellenborough's Proclamation, 15th March, 1842.

Lord Ellenborough, on his arrival at Calcutta, found himself involved in a labyrinth of difficulties, but he entered on the arduous task bequeathed by his predecessor with becoming dignity and confidence. On the 15th March, a notification signed by himself and all the members of Council announced the course which it was intended to pursue. "The British Government was no longer compelled to peril its armies, and with its armies, the Indian empire, in support of the tripartite treaty. Whatever course we may hereafter take must rest solely on military considerations and regard to the safety of the detached bodies of our troops, to the security of those now in the field from all unnecessary risk, and finally to the establishment of our military reputation by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Afghans, which may make it appear to them, and to our own subjects, and to our allies, that we have the power of inflicting punishment upon those who commit atrocities, and violate their faith, and that we withdraw ultimately from Afghanistan, not from any deficiency of means to maintain our position, but because we are satisfied, that the king we have set up, has not, as we were erroneously led to imagine, the support of the nation over which he has been placed." These noble sentiments were received with acclamation throughout India; but after a very brief residence in Calcutta, he left the Council board and proceeded to the north-

Digitized by Google

west, to be near the Commander-in-chief. During the discussions of the India Bill he had contended for placing some restrictions on the powers of Indian Governors by subjecting them to the wholesome restraint of Council, and he had dwelt with much emphasis on "the peril of leaving too much to the erratic caprice of a single man." He was now about to illustrate the truth of these remarks. As he proceeded on his journey, he received intelligence of the success of General Pollock in forcing his way through the Khyber, and of the total defeat of Akbar Khan on the 7th April, which he announced to the public in a brilliant proclamation conferring upon the garrison of Jellalabad, the title of "illustrious." But he was likewise informed of the repulse which Brigadier England had experienced at Hykulzye and of his retirement to Quettah. This trumpery check unhappily made a more powerful impression on his mind than the important successes of Sale and Pollock; and on the 19th April, he announced to the Commander-in-chief his determination to withdraw the troops of General Nott and General Pollock, at the earliest practicable period to positions where they might have certain and easy communication with India. General Nott was therefore ordered to evacuate Candahar and to retire to the Indus, after blowing up the gateways and demolishing the fortifications. The Commander-in-chief was instructed to direct the withdrawal of General Pollock's army to Peshawur, but it was left to him "to consider whether the troops, redeemed from the state of peril in which they had been placed in Afghanistan, and it may still be hoped not without the infliction of some severe blow on the Afghan army, it would be justifiable again to put them forward for no other object than that of avenging our losses, and re-establishing our military character in all its original brilliancy." The Commander-in-chief, who had always been opposed to the Afghan expedition, lost no time in ordering General Pollock to withdraw every British soldier to Peshawur, unless he should have brought the negotiation for the release of the prisoners to

Determination to withdraw, 19th April, 1842.

Digitized by Google

such a point that its happy accomplishment might be risked by withdrawal, or, had equipped a light force to rescue them, or, was in expectation of an attack from Cabul. In other words, if no negotiation was pending for the recovery of the brave officers and tender women and children held in captivity, or, if no effort had been made towards the accomplishment of this object, they were to be abandoned to their fate. Lord Ellenborough would evidently have been more safe by the side of his Council than by the side of the Commander-in-chief.

Effect of the order on General Pollock, 1843.

To this communication General Pollock replied on the 13th of May, that the withdrawal of the force at the present time, construed as it must necessarily be into a defeat, would produce a most disastrous effect, and compromise our character as a powerful nation in that part of the world. The release of the prisoners, he remarked, was also an object which could not be repudiated. The want of cattle however, would effectually prevent his immediate retirement from Jellalabad, and he ventured to hint that he might possibly be detained there for several months through the same difficulty. By this dexterous suggestion, he was enabled to evade the injunction to retire at once from his position, and he trusted to another change in the versatile mind of Lord Ellenborough for more auspicious orders. In reply to this communication he was authorized to remain at Jellalabad till October. The order to evacuate Candahar and Afghanistan fell like a thunderbolt on General Nott and Major Rawlinson. It was with no small difficulty that the admirable tact of the Major had succeeded in maintaining anything like order and government in the province amidst the reeking elements of revolt and anarchy. He felt that any suspicion of our intention to retire would raise the whole country in arms, and render it impossible any longer to procure cattle without compulsion, and that the perils of the force would be indefinitely multiplied. The political and military chiefs determined to keep the secret of these instructions to themselves; but the

And on General Nott and Major Rawlinson, 1842.

Digitized by Google

orders they had received to withdraw the garrison from Khelat-i-Ghilzye and to demolish the fortifications, could scarcely fail to open the eyes of the Afghans to the design of our Government. The ferocious Ghilzyes had determined to dislodge the British force from that fortress, and 4,000 of them had recently assailed it with unusual fury; thrice had they clambered up the ramparts, and thrice had they been hurled back by the gallantry of Captain Halkett Craigie and his men, nor did they withdraw till 500 of their number lay killed and wounded on the field. This triumph, which gave additional strength to our authority, rendered the proposal to abandon the fortress the more grievous. But General Nott replied promptly to the requisition of the Governor-General on the 19th May, though not without a heavy heart, that the evacuation of the province should be effected in the best manner circumstances would admit of. Arrangements were immediately commenced for withdrawing the army, but happily they were allowed to occupy two months, and before they were completed, he received a communication from Lord Ellenborough, dated the 4th July, which left him free to march to Cabul.

Lord Ellenborough's change of plan, 1842.

Lord Ellenborough had enjoined secrecy on the generals relative to the order of evacuation; but it was not possible to conceal it from the public, and it became known throughout the country before it reached Jellalabad or Candahar. Never before had such a burst of indignation been excited in India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. It was universally felt that this dastardly retirement would inflict a deeper and more galling stigma on the national character than the humiliation at Cabul, which might be considered one of the chances of war. With all the contempt which Lord Ellenborough professed for public opinion, it was scarcely possible that he could be indifferent to this unanimity of reprobation. It is also known that the Court of Directors and his own colleagues in the Ministry had intimated their expectation that an attempt should be made to

Digitized by Google

vindicate the national honour and liberate the prisoners before we retired from the country. For fifteen weeks he continued to reiterate his determination to withdraw, but there were indications in his official correspondence that his mind was vacillating between the opposite attractions of national honour and personal consistency. At length he discovered an expedient for reconciling them. On the 4th July, Mr. Maddock, the secretary to Government, was instructed to convey to General Nott the official assurance that the resolution of the Governor-General to withdraw the troops at Candahar to India remained without alteration. On the same day Lord Ellenborough wrote himself to the General suggesting that it might possibly be feasible for him to withdraw from Afghanistan by advancing to Ghuzni and Cabul, over the scenes of our late disasters. "I know," he said, "all the effect it would have on the minds of our soldiers, of our allies, of our enemies in Asia, and of our own countrymen, and of all foreign nations in Europe. It is an object of just ambition which no one more than myself would rejoice to see effected; but I see that failure in the attempt is certain and irretrievable ruin, and I would inspire you with the necessary caution, and make you feel that, great as are the objects to be obtained by success, the risk is great." This mode of withdrawal, as every one, not excepting even the Governor-General, could perceive was nothing more or less than an advance on the capital with the view of planting the British standard again on the battlements of the Bala Hissar, and retrieving our national honour. It was unquestionably the duty of Lord Ellenborough, as the head of the state, to have taken the responsibility of this risk on himself, and to have furnished General Nott with distinct instructions, instead of leaving him to encounter the risk and the odium of failure. A copy of this communication was sent to General Pollock, with the suggestion that he might possibly feel disposed to advance to Cabul in order to co-operate with General Nott. Both generals were too happy to obtain permission to move up to the capital and restore our military character, and

Digitized by Google

liberate the captives, to shrink from the responsibility with which it was clogged.

Shah Soojah, 1842.

Before following the march of the armies of retribution, it is necessary to allude to the fortunes of Shah Soojah, and of the hostages and captives. After the retreat of the British army on the 6th January, the Shah continued to occupy the Bala Hissar. The insurgent chiefs acknowledged him as king and paid him an empty homage, but they themselves engrossed all the substantive power of the state, and continued to coin money and to read prayers in the name of Zemaun Khan, who had been elected the supreme ruler after the 2nd November. The Shah sent repeated communications to Jellalabad, declaring his unalterable attachment to the British Government, and asking for nothing but money, though he had contrived to save twenty lacs of rupees out of the sums lavished on him since he left Loodiana. He endeavoured at the same time to convince the chiefs of his unalterable fidelity to the national cause, and he was consequently mistrusted by both parties. To test his sincerity, the chiefs desired him to place himself at the head of the army they had assembled to march on Jellalabad and expel General Sale. It was rumoured that he would be murdered or blinded by the Barukzyes if he left the Bala Hissar, but Zemaun Khan endeavoured to remove his suspicions by an oath on the Koran. With this assurance he descended from the citadel on the 5th April, decked out in all the insignia of royalty, of which he was inordinately proud, but was shot dead on the road by a body of matchlock men whom the son of Zemaun Khan had placed in ambush, without his father's knowledge. His body was rifled of the costly jewels which he always carried about his person, and thrown into a ditch; and thus terminated his chequered career of five and thirty years. Great doubts have been entertained of his fidelity to his English allies, but the balance of evidence fixes on him the charge of having given encouragement to those feelings of opposition which resulted in the revolt at the beginning of November, inasmuch

Digitized by Google

as on the departure of Sir William Macnaghten, who had always been his friend, he was to be consigned to the control of Sir Alexander Burnes, who was personally obnoxious to him, as he was to every other Afghan chief. The assassin was condemned to be stoned to death by the doctors of Mahomedan law, but his influence was too powerful to permit the execution of the sentence. The Shah's son Futteh Jung, a man of weak intellect and dissolute manners, was proclaimed king by one party, and he succeeded in rescuing the body of his father, which, after lying in state for some days, was interred with royal honours. Other parties were opposed to him; a civil war raged in the city, which was bombarded from the guns of the Bala Hissar, and there was fighting from house to house. Akbar Khan returned to the capital after his defeat at Jellalabad, and laid close siege to the citadel, which surrendered on the 7th June. The victorious Barukzyes then fell out among themselves, a battle was fought between the factions, and Akbar Khan's troops remained masters of the field. Futteh Jung was replaced on the throne, stripped of all the wealth Shah Soojah had accumulated, and reduced to the condition of a puppet, while Akbar Khan became the head of the government.

The English hostages and captives, 1842.

Of the British officers who were taken over as hostages the greater number were entrusted to Zemaun Khan, the only Afghan chief who never wavered in his attachment to the English throughout these scenes of treachery, and whom they were accustomed to describe as the good Nabob. He treated them with uniform kindness, and not only refused every demand to surrender them to the ferocity of the other chiefs, but raised a body of 3,000 troops at his own expense for their protection; but on the death of Shah Soojah he was constrained by the clamour of the people to make them over to the high priest of Cabul, under whose guardianship they remained till the beginning of July, when Akbar Khan attained supreme power in the city. Having formed the resolution of obtaining possession of the

Digitized by Google

hostages, he at length prevailed upon the priest to sell them for 4,000 rupees, after which they were lodged in the Bala Hissar. The captives, consisting of nine ladies, twenty gentlemen, and fourteen children, who had been made over to him during the retreat, were conducted through the recent scenes of slaughter, amidst the mangled corpses, which emitted the sickening smell of death, to a fort at Tezeen. Soon afterwards they were conveyed over mountain paths, all but impassable, to Budeabad, forty miles distant from Jellalabad, where they were lodged for three months in the apartments built for the family of Mahomed Shah, the father-in-law of Akbar Khan. No disposition was manifested to embitter their captivity by harshness; they were daily supplied with a sufficient quantity of coarse food, and a sum of 1,000 rupees was distributed among them to purchase sugar and other luxuries. The monotony of their prison life was relieved by correspondence in cypher with their friends at Jellalabad, and by the receipt of books and newspapers. During the absence of Akbar Khan, however, Mahomed Shah did not scruple to plunder them of the few articles of property they still possessed. On the approach of General Pollock's division to Jellalabad, Akbar Khan deemed it advisable to remove them for greater security to a more distant asylum. After a difficult march over barren hills and stony valleys, they were again lodged in the fort of Tezeen, where General Elphinstone sunk under the accumulation of bodily suffering and mental distress; a noble and brave soldier, endeared to all around him by his urbanity, and beloved by the men for his gallantry, but without any qualification for the anxious post which Lord Auckland had thrust upon him. His remains were conveyed to Jellalabad by his faithful servant Moore, with the permission of Akbar, and interred by the garrison with military honours. On the 22nd May the captives were again removed, and conveyed to a fort three miles from Cabul, where they enjoyed more liberty and comfort than they had yet experienced. They had the free use of an orchard and its fruit; they were

Digitized by Google

allowed the luxury of a bath in the river, and permitted to interchange visits with their friends in the Bala Hissar. They received letters from Jellalabad, from India, and from England, and there was abundant exercise for the body, and healthy occupation for the mind during the three months of their captivity in this fortress.

Advance of General Pollock, 1842.

For more than three months the camp at Jellalabad had been kept in a state of feverish suspense regarding the intentions of Government. There was a general dread lest the armies should be ordered to retire from the country leaving their cannon, standards, sick and wounded, and their brave countrymen and helpless females and children, in the hands of a barbarous and exulting foe, and the order to advance to Cabul was received with a shout of exultation. Meanwhile Akbar Khan deputed one of the British officers whom he held in captivity, to negotiate with General Pollock for the release of the prisoners, which he agreed to grant on condition that the British force should evacuate the country without marching on the capital; and he threatened if this were refused, to send them into Turkistan and distribute them among the Oosbeg chiefs. The request, as might have been expected, was peremptorily refused, and though the negotiation was subsequently renewed, it never came to any result. Lord Ellenborough had made energetic and unceasing efforts to furnish General Pollock with cattle, to enable him to retire to Peshawur, and his march to Cabul was facilitated in no small degree by these abundant supplies, but he could not venture to advance before he had the assurance that the communication of the 4th July had reached General Nott in time to prevent his marching southwards, in accordance with previous orders. It was not before the middle of August that General Pollock was informed that the General had turned his face towards Cabul; and on the 20th of that month an army of 8,000 men, animated with feelings of the highest enthusiasm marched out of Jellalabad to avenge the national honour. At Jugdulluk, where the

Digitized by Google

Ghilzyes had eight months before slaughtered our troops without mercy, they appeared again under the ablest of their leaders, and with the flower of their tribes; but they had no longer a dispirited and fugitive soldiery to deal with. The "illustrious garrison" of Jellalabad took the lead in the assault, and drove them from heights which appeared inaccessible, uttering loud cheers as standard after standard fell into their hands. The victory was in every respect complete, and it proved that the triumph of the Afghans in January was the result not of their own superior valour, but of the utter incompetence of the British officers. The rout of the Ghilzyes, and the bold and confident movements of General Pollock, spread consternation through all ranks at Cabul. Akbar Khan put his threat in execution, and sent all the prisoners and hostages to Turkistan, and then advanced with the chiefs of Cabul and their forces, to make one last effort to protect it from an avenging foe. The British soldiers as they moved forward were roused to a state of frantic excitement by the sight of the mangled remains of their comrades, with which the route was strewed, and there could be little doubt of the result of any conflict with the enemy.

Battle of Tezeen, 1842.

The two forces met in the valley of Tezeen, which at the beginning of the year had been the scene of a great massacre. It is surrounded on all sides by lofty hills, and every available height bristled with matchlock men who had poured down from Cabul. The Afghan horse, intent on plunder, were the first to advance to the conflict, but they were routed with great slaughter by the European dragoons and the native cavalry. The artillery then engaged in the assault, and did great execution both in the valley and on the heights, while the infantry clambered up the hills, in the face of a murderous fire from the jezails of the Afghans. The sepoy emulated his European comrade; and with a steady pace and dauntless spirit they united in driving the enemy from crag to crag, and dispersed them like chaff before the wind. Akbar Khan fled from the field into the highlands

Digitized by Google

Re-occupation of Cabul, 1842.

north of Cabul, leaving his followers to shift for themselves, and the British army, after a triumphant march through the scenes of their humiliation, encamped on the Cabul race-course on the 15th Séptember, and the British ensign again floated over the Bala Hissar.

Advance from Candahar, 1842.

Aktar Khan, the leader of the insurrection in Western Afghanistan, who fled to Herat after his defeat, had now returned and assumed the command of the disaffected chiefs, and determined to take advantage of the absence of Colonel Wymer at Khelat-i-Ghilzye. On the 29th May, the whole body of the enemy appeared in the neighbourhood of Candahar; the hills were crowned with masses of horsemen, and the rocky heights covered with their infantry, thick as locusts. Conspicuous in the centre of the front ranks appeared a female figure surrounded by the chieftains, and animating the fanatic ghazees to the conflict. It was the gallant widow of Akram Khan—the rebel, or the patriot—whom the Cabul authorities had ordered to be blown from a gun at the close of the previous year, and who had now abandoned the seclusion of the zenana to avenge his death, and placed herself in the front of the battle mounted on his charger, and unfolded his standard. Under cover of the guns, General Nott's infantry stormed the heights, and drove the Afghans successively from every position, and the cavalry was then let loose to complete the victory. The next eight weeks were passed in collecting cattle and provisions for the retrograde march to the Indus through the Bolan pass, which Lord Ellenborough had ordered on the 18th April, but the arrangements were scarcely completed when his auspicious despatch of the 4th July reached Candahar, and General Nott accepted with alacrity the responsibility of retiring to India by way of Cabul, as the Governor-General facetiously termed the march. A portion of the force was sent back with the heavy guns, through the Bolan pass under Brigadier England, and on the 7th August, General Nott evacuated Candahar, leaving the province in the hands of Sufder Jung, the son of Shah Soojah, who had

Digitized by Google

intermediately abandoned the insurgents, and made his peace with the British authorities. Owing to the admirable discipline maintained by General Nott and Major Rawlinson, there had been no licentiousness on the part of the soldiers to irritate the inhabitants, who were seen to crowd around them and embrace them as they bade farewell to the town. The army reached Ghuzni without encountering any opposition worthy of record, and found the citadel in good repair, but the town in a state of dilapidation. The fortifications were blown up; the wood work was set on fire; and throughout the night the sky was illuminated by the flames of this ancient and renowned fortress, to which a new celebrity had been given by the latest conquerors of India. The request made by Runjeet Sing to Shah Soojah in 1833, to make over the gates of Somnath, which he indignantly rejected, had taken the fancy of Lord Ellenborough, and he determined to attach to his administration the honour of restoring them to India. In his letter of the 4th of July, he instructed General Nott, if he should elect to retire by way of Ghuzni and Cabul, "to bring away from the tomb of Mahmood, his club which hangs over it, and the gates of his tomb which are the gates of the temple of Somnath, which will be the just trophies of your successful march." Major Rawlinson, the highest authority on questions of oriental archæology, after a careful examination of the inscription, came to the conclusion that they were only a fac simile of the original gates; but the priesthood maintained a different opinion, and bemoaned the loss of them, and of the rich harvest they derived from the numerous pilgrims who resorted to the shrine. The Hindoo sepoys, on the other hand, exhibited no feeling of exultation, and were unable to comprehend the object of this singular proceeding. Great care was taken to avoid any desecration of the tomb during the removal of the trophies. They were carefully packed up, and accompanied the army to Cabul, which General Nott reached the day after the arrival of the Bengal division.

Digitized by Google

Rescue of the Prisoners, 1842.

The first object of General Pollock on reaching Cabul was the recovery of the prisoners whom Akbar Khan had suddenly removed from Cabul on the 25th August, and sent forward day and night, without intermission or rest, several thousand feet above the level of the sea, over the barren wastes and steep ascents of the Hindoo Koosh, to Bameean, where they arrived on the 3rd September. Sir Richmond Shakespeare, the General's military secretary, was immediately despatched in command of 600 horsemen, to make every effort to overtake them. The day after, Sir Robert Sale was likewise sent forward with a brigade to assist in this noble enterprise. The commander of the Afghan escort with the prisoners was Saleh Mahomed, a soldier of fortune, who had been a native commandant in Captain Hopkins's local regiment which had deserted to the Dost in the previous year. On the line of march to Bameean, this gossiping Afghan established a friendly intercourse with Captain Johnson, one of the prisoners, who possessed a perfect knowledge of the native language and character, and who endeavoured to work on his cupidity for the release of the captives, but at first with little apparent success. On the 11th September, Saleh Mahomed called Captain Johnson, Captain Lawrence, and Major Pottinger aside, and produced a letter from Akbar Khan directing him to convey the prisoners into the higher regions of the Hindoo Koosh, and transfer them to the Oosbeg chief of Khooloom. Their dismay may be readily conceived at the prospect thus presented to them, of passing the remainder of their lives in dismal and hopeless captivity among these barbarians; but it was speedily relieved when he proceeded further to state, that he had likewise received a message from the moonshee, Mohun Lall, at Cabul, promising him on the part of General Pollock, a gratuity of 20,000 rupees and an annuity of 12,000 rupees, if he would restore the captives to liberty. "I know nothing," he said, "of General Pollock, but if you three gentlemen will swear by your Saviour to make good to me the offer I have received, I will deliver you over

Digitized by Google

to your own people." The proposal was accepted with rapture, and the officers and the ladies hastened to bind themselves by a deed to provide the requisite funds, according to their respective means. The hero of Herat was now in his element. By common consent he assumed the direction of their movements, deposed the governor of Bameean, and appointed a more friendly chief in his stead, hoisted another flag, and laid under contribution a tribe of Lohanee merchants who happened to be passing through the country. He issued proclamations calling upon all the neighbouring chiefs to come in and make their obeisance; and all the decent apparel left with the prisoners was bestowed in dresses of honour on those who obeyed the summons, to whom he likewise granted remissions of revenue. The services of the Afghan escort, consisting of about 250 men, were secured by a promise of four months' pay on reaching Cabul. After this daring assumption of authority, Major Pottinger deemed it necessary to prepare for a siege, and lost no time in repairing the fortifications, digging wells, and laying in a supply of provisions. On the 15th September, a horseman galloped in from Cabul with the electrifying news that Akbar Khan had been completely defeated by General Pollock at Tezeen, that the Afghan force was annihilated, and the British army in full march on the capital. Major Pottinger and his fellow prisoners determined to return without any delay to Cabul. They quitted the fort on the morning of the 16th, and slept that night on the bare rocks, unconscious of fatigue or suffering. At midnight they were aroused by a mounted messenger with a note from Sir Richmond announcing his approach, and the next afternoon he and his little squadron were in the midst of the band of prisoners, and the sufferings of eight months were at an end. On the 20th, the column sent under the command of Sir Robert Sale joined the cavalcade, and the General was locked in the embraces of his wife and daughter; two days after, the cantonments at Cabul rang with acclamations as the captives entered them. Never since the establishment of British rule in

Digitized by Google

India had so intense a feeling of suspense and anxiety pervaded the length and breadth of the land as the fate of the prisoners created, and the thrill of delight which vibrated through the community on the report of their safety may be more easily conceived than described.

Capture of Istaliff, 1842.

In the meanwhile, Ameenoolla Khan, one of the most ferocious opponents of British authority in Afghanistan, was collecting the scattered remnants of the Afghan army in the Kohistan, or highlands of Cabul, to renew the struggle, and it was deemed important to break up this hostile gathering. Istaliff, the chief town, was situated on the margin of a valley, which for its genial climate, its lovely aspect, and its luxuriant orchards, was considered the garden of eastern Afghanistan. This fortified town was regarded as the virgin fortress of the province, and deemed so secure against any attack that the Afghans had lodged their treasure and their families in it, with perfect confidence. A force was despatched against it under General M'Caskill, but he left all the arrangements of the day to Captain Havelock, through whose admirable strategy, the town was carried by assault with trifling loss. Ameenoolla was among the first to fly, and the whole population, men, women, and children, were soon after seen to stream over the hills, in their white garments, in eager flight. Chareekar, where the Goorkha regiment had been slaughtered, as well as several other towns which had taken a prominent part in the insurrection, were also destroyed.

Destruction of the Great Bazaar, 1842.

The object of the expedition had now been fully accomplished. Afghanistan had been re-conquered, our prisoners recovered, and our military reputation re-established in the eyes of India, and throughout Central Asia. Among the ablest of our political officers, there were some who considered that a precipitate retirement might neutralize the effect of our success, and they recommended the continued occupation of the country, at least for twelvemonths. But although Afghanistan was more completely at our feet than it had been at any period

Digitized by Google

since we entered it, the increasing complication of Punjab politics, and the growing power and insubordination of the Khalsa soldiery rendered it impolitic to maintain a large army of occupation at an inordinate cost, in a false and perilous position beyond the Indus, and Lord Ellenborough wisely determined to withdraw the whole force before the winter. It was deemed advisable however, to leave some lasting mark of retribution on the capital, and the great bazaar, where the mutilated remains of Sir William Macnaghten had been exposed to the insults of the mob, was selected for destruction. It was the noblest building of its kind in Central Asia, and too substantial to yield to anything but gunpowder; two days were therefore employed in blowing it up. A report was simultaneously spread that Cabul was to be given up to plunder, and though the most strenuous efforts were made to guard the gates, the soldiers rushed in from both camps with an irresistible impetus. Houses and shops were pillaged, the city was set on fire in several places, and subjected for three days to the wild and licentious passions of men maddened by a remembrance of the foul and treacherous murder of their comrades, and by the tokens of our disgrace which met the eye in every direction. The quarter of the friendly tribe of the Kuzzilbashes was with difficulty saved from destruction, but the vengeance wreaked on the rest of the city has no parallel in our Indian history.

Return of the army, 1842.

The English colours were hauled down from the ramparts of the Bala Hissar on the 12th October, and the two armies turned their backs on Cabul. The old blind king, Zemaun Shah, the brother of Shah Soojah, whose expedition across the Indus and whose negotiations with Tippoo and other native princes, had spread consternation throughout India in the days of Lord Wellesley, returned with the army to close a life of vicissitude under the shade of the Company's protection. The family of Shah Soojah, and the remnant of that royal family took advantage of the opportunity to return to their former retreat on the banks of the

Digitized by Google

Sutlege. The force halted at Jellalabad to enable General Pollock to demolish the fortifications, and then pushed on through the Khyber, which he traversed without molestation by adopting the plan he had pursued when he entered it six months before, of crowning and clearing the heights. General Maclaren and General Nott, who commanded the centre and rear divisions, did not deem it necessary to take the same precaution, and they consequently suffered the disgrace of leaving a considerable portion of their baggage in the hands of the hereditary freebooters of the pass. At Peshawur the officers were entertained with splendid hospitality by General Avitabile. The march of the army through the Punjab, owing partly to the friendly disposition of the ruler Shere Sing, and partly to the assemblage of a large force at Ferozepore, was not interrupted by any adverse feeling.

Proclamation of Lord Ellenborough, 1842.

Lord Ellenborough received intelligence of the re-occupation of Cabul whilst residing at Simla, in the house in which Lord Auckland had, four years before, penned the manifesto which ushered in the Afghan war. It fell to the lot of Lord Ellenborough to issue a proclamation announcing its termination, and he could not resist the temptation of giving it dramatic effect, by affixing the same date, the 1st October, to it, though it was not issued till ten days after. The proclamation stated that the British arms would now be withdrawn from Afghanistan, but as he had not at the date of it received any intelligence of the prisoners, except that they had been sent into captivity in the wild regions of the Hindoo Koosh, the public loudly denounced this manifest indifference to their fate. No such document had ever before issued from the Governor-General's bureau. The policy of the state in times past had been subject to repeated changes, but these changes had been carried into effect without any ostentatious parade of superior wisdom, or any reflection on previous transactions, and the Government of India at successive periods had always presented to its princes and people the dignified and imposing appearance of unanimity. But on this

Digitized by Google

occasion, the policy of a preceding administration was for the first time officially held up to public contempt. "Disasters unparalleled in their extent, except by the errors in which they originated have in one short campaign been avenged upon every scene of past misfortune. The enormous expenditure required for the support of a large force in a false position will no longer arrest every measure for the improvement and comfort of the people. The combined army of England and India, superior in equipment, in discipline, in valour, and in the officers by whom it is commanded to any force that can be opposed to it in Asia, will stand in unassailable strength upon its own soil, and, for ever, under the blessing of Providence, preserve the glorious empire it has won in security and honour." Lord Ellenborough had been in such a state of excitement since he assumed the charge of the Government that these inflated expressions excited little surprise, and the community only regretted that with all his fine talent he had so little ballast. The proclamation of the Gates appeared next, but it was at once seen to be a servile imitation of Bonaparte's Egyptian proclamation. The Somnath gates were to be restored to India with a grand flourish of trumpets. "My brethren and friends," said the Governor-General in his address to the natives, "our victorious army bears the gates of the temple of Somnath in triumph from Afghanistan, and the despoiled tomb of Mahmood looks on the ruins of Ghuzni. The insult of eight hundred years is avenged. To you princes and chiefs of Sirhind, of Rajwarra, of Malwa, and Guzerat, I shall commit this glorious trophy of successful warfare. You will yourselves with all honour transmit the gates of sandal wood to the restored temple of Somnath." This gasconade was designated by the Duke of Wellington, "a song of triumph;" but the community in India, native as well as European, regarded it as the triumph of folly over common sense. The gates, even if genuine, had been desecrated by their association with a Mahomedan mosque. The princes and chiefs to whom the address was sent, were partly Hindoos and partly

Digitized by Google

Mahomedans. To the latter it was an unequivocal insult; to the Hindoos, not one in twenty of whom had ever heard of the legend, the whole transaction appeared an absurdity. There was, moreover, no temple of Somnath to receive them, and it was preposterous to suppose that the Government of India intended to erect and endow one. In the General Order which Lord Ellenborough issued on the occasion, he directed that these trophies of our arms should be transmitted from Ferozepore to Somnath, on the western coast, a distance of 600 miles, with every demonstration of pomp, under the charge of an officer on a salary of 1,000 rupees a month, with an escort of three European officers and a hundred sepoys. They were to receive double batta during the service, and, to give additional importance to the procession, a detachment of his own body guard was to accompany it, under charge of one of his aides-de-camp. The gates were placed on a carriage covered with costly trappings, and brought in the Governor-General's train from Ferozepore to Agra. At the shrines of Muttra and Brindabun, which he visited on his route, they were unveiled for three days for the benefit of the brahmins and devotees. As the encampment proceeded on its way to Agra hundreds of Hindoos daily prostrated themselves before the car, and made poojah and offerings to it as to a deity. But the gates were not destined to reach Somnath; they never travelled beyond Agra, where they were soon after consigned to a lumber room in the fort.

Meeting at Ferozepore, 1842.

At Ferozepore to which the divisions of General Nott and General Pollock were now tending, Lord Ellenborough had assembled a large army, partly to overawe the Sikhs, and partly to give a grand ovation to the returning heroes "at the foot of the bridge of the Sutlege." Two hundred and fifty elephants had been collected for the occasion, and Lord Ellenborough superintended in person the painting of their trunks, and the completion of their gaudy caparisons. They were to be drawn up in two lines and to salute the victorious battalions on their bended knees, but as

Digitized by Google

the elephant crouches on his hind legs, half the effect of the display was lost. The officers were feasted in magnificent tents, decorated with flags bearing the names of their victories, and the sepoys were regaled, as the Governor-General's notification ran, "with their favourite metoys" or sweetmeats. Including the regiments from Afghanistan more than 40,000 British troops were assembled on this occasion at Ferozepore, and presented an imposing array of power after our disasters beyond the Indus. An interview between the Governor-General and Shere Sing, the ruler of the Punjab, was prevented by some accidental misunderstanding, but the heir apparent came down with a strong escort of Sikh troops to compliment him. He reviewed the British army and noticed with peculiar interest the veterans of General Nott's and General Sale's brigades. The camp was then broken up, to the great relief of Shere Sing, who was haunted with the dread of a conflict with the British force, and on its departure considered himself happy in having escaped a great peril. A court-martial was convened, according to professional usage, to investigate the conduct of the officers who had "abandoned their posts and gone over to the enemy," and they were honorably acquitted of all blame. Major Pottinger's proceedings were submitted to a court of enquiry, of which Mr. George Clerk was President, the result of which added fresh lustre to the character of the young soldier who had driven the Persian army from Herat, and resisted the capitulation at Cabul, even in the last extremity. The Afghan prisoners in our hands were likewise released. Lord Ellenborough intended at first that they should present themselves at the durbar at Ferozepore while he was celebrating the triumph of the British arms in Afghanistan, but the universal voice of society was raised against so ungracious and so un-English a treatment of men whom we had torn from their country, and on whom we had inflicted a grievous injury. The more generous feelings of Lord Ellenborough's nature overcame his love of display, and Dost

Digitized by Google

Mahomed was dismissed at a private interview. On taking leave of him the Governor-General enquired his opinion of the English after all he had seen of them in India. "I have been struck," he replied, "with the magnitude of your power, and your resources, with your ships, your arsenals, and your armies, but what I cannot understand, is, why the rulers of so vast and flourishing an empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country."

Remarks on the expedition, 1842.

The surprise expressed by the Dost was equally shared by the English community both in India and in England, with the exception of the cabinet of secretaries at Simla and the Whig cabinet in Downing Street. After twenty-five years of calm reflection, the expedition still appears an unparalleled instance of human rashness and folly. The object of the war was to counteract the hostile designs of Persia, by securing a friendly power in Afghanistan. Mr. McNeill advised the Government of India to subsidize and strengthen Dost Mahomed, who was eager for our alliance; but Lord Auckland and Mr. Macnaghten rejected this counsel and resolved to place a puppet on the throne, whom it became necessary to support by British bayonets and British gold. They accordingly took possession of a country of mountains and snow, filled with a turbulent and fanatic population, and we planted our armies in positions separated from all support by the Kojuk and the Bolan passes on one side, and by the Khoord Cabul and the Khyber on the other. Our most easterly post in Afghanistan was distant from the nearest post in India by thirty-five marches, and the intervening space was occupied by the cities, forts, and armies of a powerful and doubtful ally, whose troops were organizing annual revolutions, and whose Government was fast verging into a state of servile subjection to them. The crisis of 1838 came round again in 1856. The King of Persia invaded Herat and mastered the city, and it was deemed important to the interests of the Indian empire to check his career. Time had assuaged the feelings of the Dost, and he had entered into a treaty with us

Digitized by Google

engaging "to be the friend of the friends and the enemy of the enemies of the Company." He was liberally supplied with arms and money to oppose the Persians ; a military demonstration was likewise made by a British army in the maritime provinces of Persia, and under the influence of these combined movements, the king was constrained to withdraw from Herat and sue for peace: If the same politic course had been adopted by Lord Auckland, we should have been saved the greatest disgrace our arms had ever encountered in Asia, and the loss of fifteen thousand lives, and fifteen crores of rupees.

Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly, 1839-42.

One of the most mournful episodes of the Afghan war was the tragic end of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly. The Colonel had been sent as envoy to Bokhara at the close of 1839 to promote the liberation of the Russian slaves, and to enter into a friendly treaty with the Ameer. The prince was of a haughty and revengeful temper, and while he claimed the title of Commander of the Faithful, was regarded throughout Central Asia as the incarnation of perfidy and ferocity. He had addressed a letter to the Queen of England, and being irritated by the contempt with which it was treated at the Foreign Office, determined to wreak his vengeance on the only Englishman in his power, notwithstanding the fact of his being a diplomatic agent. A complimentary reply under the royal sign manual to the most powerful chief in Central Asia, with whom we were seeking to establish an alliance, would not have lowered the dignity of the Crown inasmuch as George the third, and the Prince of Wales had corresponded directly with the Nabob of the Carnatic. Colonel Stoddart was consigned to a loathsome prison and repeatedly scourged, and required to turn Mussulman, which he steadily refused. He was soon after cast into a dark pit, the place of torment for the vilest criminals, filled with decomposed animal matter and the bones of the dead, and subsequently exposed at one of the gates of the city to the jeers and the brutality of the faithful, but he

Digitized by Google

continued resolutely to adhere to his faith. The next day he was again severely beaten, and his grave was dug before his eyes. "The grating of the spades," as he subsequently recorded, "jarred on my shattered nerves beyond endurance," and it was in this state of mental and physical prostration that he pronounced the formula of the Mahomedan creed. He was, however, destined to two months of additional suffering, but he endured it with a degree of constancy which excited the admiration even of his persecutors. The continued success of the British arms in Afghanistan induced the Ameer to treat him with some degree of consideration, but the expedition sent across the Hindoo Koosh by Sir William Macnaghten, combined with the deputation of political missions to Khiva and Kokan, raised a suspicion in his mind that the English Government had a design on the independence of Turkistan. He, therefore, adopted the precaution of despatching a mission to St. Petersburg to solicit the aid of Russia. It appears that a fair opportunity was at this time presented to Colonel Stoddart of escaping from the country, through the influence of Russia, but from a high though mistaken sense of honour, he refused to take advantage of it, lest he should appear to owe his liberation to the good offices of a foreign Government. Lord Palmerston solicited the friendly efforts of the Russian Government on his behalf, and Colonel Bouteneff, who was sent by the Emperor on a return embassy to Bokhara in May, 1841, was instructed to persist with greater importunity in demanding his release. Letters from Lord Clanricarde, the British Minister at St. Petersburg were transmitted to him by that occasion, and the Russian Chancellor, in his communication to the Governor-General of Orenberg, expressed a hope that the Colonel would be induced "to waive his feelings of misplaced vanity," and embrace the present opportunity of obtaining his release. Colonel Bouteneff reached Bokhara in August, 1841, and Colonel Stoddart was permitted to take up his residence with the Russian mission. In October, Captain Conolly, who had been sent on a mission

Digitized by Google

by Sir William Macnaghten to Kokan, arrived at Bokhara, but he was suspected of having encouraged the ruler of that state in his hostility to the Ameer, and was immediately arrested and his property confiscated. The Ameer had addressed a second letter to the Queen of England, but was referred for a reply to the Government of India. His communications with Russia had always been made directly to the Emperor, who did not disdain to reply to his letters; and he regarded the different treatment he had received from the Foreign Office in England in the light not only of an insult, but of a subterfuge, as the Government of India was universally believed to be hostile to Bokhara. Then came the insurrection at Cabul, and the murder of Sir Alexander Burnes. Colonel Stoddart was immediately removed from the protection of the Russian mission, and subjected, together with Captain Conolly, to a rigid imprisonment. The entire destruction of the British army produced a complete revolution in the feelings of the Ameer regarding the value of any European connection. He no longer considered the Russian alliance an object of any importance, and the mission was treated with great contumely. The envoy was abruptly summoned to his presence as he was setting out on a fresh expedition to Kokan, and dismissed from his court with contemptuous indifference. Colonel Bouteneff, who had for some time been apprehensive of being sent to keep company with the English prisoners, was happy to escape from the hands of this capricious tyrant. On his departure, he demanded the release of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly, in conformity with the promise of the Ameer, but was informed that another letter had been addressed to the Queen of England, and that they would be forwarded direct to England on the receipt of her reply. On the 17th June, however, they were both led out to the market-place of Bokhara and decapitated.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S ADMINISTRATION—SINDE AND GWALIOR WAR, 1842—1844.

Sinde, 1842.

On the 1st October, 1842, Lord Ellenborough announced in his Simla proclamation that the "Government of India, content with the limits which nature appears to have assigned to its empire, would devote all its efforts to the establishment and maintenance of peace," and he ordered a medal to be struck to inaugurate the reign of peace with the motto, "Pax Asiæ restituta." Before six months had elapsed, he issued another proclamation, annexing the whole kingdom of Sinde to the Company's dominions. That country was divided into three principalities, Upper Sinde, ruled by the Ameers of Khyrpore, of whom Meer Roostum was the chief; Meerpoore, governed by Shere Mahomed, and Lower Sinde held by the Ameers of Hyderabad. They were independent of each other, almost to the same extent as the princes of Rajpootana, and Lord Auckland had entered into separate treaties with them in 1839; but in 1842 it was resolved by the officers commanding in Sinde, to treat them as one body, and to hold all the Ameers responsible for the assumed default of any one of them. The humiliating treaties dictated in 1839 had imposed on them a subsidiary force and a tribute, but it had left them their estates and their regal dignity, and they appear to have acquiesced meekly in the subordinate condition to which they were reduced. During the three subsequent years in which Afghanistan was occupied by our troops, and Sinde had become the basis of our operations beyond the Indus, their conduct was marked by good faith, if not by cordiality. Under the personal influence of Major Outram, the political Resident, they permitted a free passage to our troops and stores through their country, and assisted the steamers

Digitized by Google

with fuel. Any opposition on their part would have occasioned the most serious inconvenience, but the garrisons of Candahar and of the other posts in southern Afghanistan which were entirely dependent on the supplies received from and through Sinde, were never allowed to suffer want. This friendly aid was gratefully acknowledged by Lord Auckland when on the eve of quitting India. After the Cabul force had been annihilated, and our military reputation had suffered a partial eclipse, the Ameers still continued to furnish supplies and carriage, which they might have withheld without any infraction of the treaties. The force at Candahar could neither have retired to the Indus, or advanced to Cabul without the assistance of Sinde, and it was solely by means of the three thousand camels sent up from that province that General Nott was enabled to march on the capital. But two or three of the Ameers were emboldened by our reverses to manifest a feeling of hostility, and Major Outram brought it to the knowledge of Lord Ellenborough in the form of distinct charges, which he represented to be of so serious a nature as to justify a demand for a revision of the treaties. Lord Ellenborough replied that he was resolved to inflict signal chastisement, even to the confiscation of his dominions, on any chief or Ameer who should have exhibited hostile designs against us during the late events, founded on a doubt of the existence of our power, but he added that there must be clear proof of the faithlessness of the Ameers, and it must not be "provoked by the conduct of the British agents, producing on the mind of any chief an apprehension that the Government entertained designs inconsistent with his interests or his honour."

Sir Charles Napier's proceedings, 1842.

Sir Charles Napier arrived in Sinde on the 9th September, invested with full diplomatic as well as military power. He was a soldier of distinguished reputation, and of extraordinary resolution and energy; but he was new to India, and profoundly ignorant of the language, habits, and character of its princes and people, and of political life in it. He landed in Sinde with a violent

Digitized by Google

prejudice against the Ameers, and in his first interview with them at Hyderabad discarded all those amenities which had always characterized the intercourse of the Company's functionaries with the princes of India. Lord Ellenborough had particularly enjoined on the British agents in Sinde to consider themselves the representatives of the friendship as much as of the power of the British Government, and to be mindful that all necessary acts of authority should be clothed with the veil of courtesy and regard. This generous admonition was entirely neglected by Sir Charles Napier. His menacing address created lively apprehensions in the minds of the Ameers, and all his subsequent proceedings only tended to confirm them. The investigation of the charges of disloyalty brought against the Ameers by Major Outram, was referred to him by the Governor-General, but with the distinct injunction that he should not proceed against any of them without the most complete proof of their guilt. All the charges except three were at once dismissed, and the question of their delinquency turned upon three points: whether a letter sent to a petty Boogtie chief, and another sent to the ruler of the Punjab were genuine, and whether the minister of Meer Roostum, of Upper Sinde, had favoured the escape of a malcontent. The evidence of the authenticity of the letters was considered by the best authorities in India extremely doubtful, and the seals appeared to have been forged:—in Sinde the fabrication of seals was a profession. Upon every principle of equity and fair dealing, the Ameers ought to have been heard in their own defence before they were condemned; but Sir Charles Napier called upon them for no explanation, and, relying only on his own sagacity, and on the opinion of one of his junior assistants, as ignorant of the country as himself, informed Lord Ellenborough that the letters were authentic, and the charges substantiated; and that the treaty of 1839 had been violated.

The new treaty, 1842.

Major Outram had submitted, together with the charges against the Ameers, the draft of the

Digitized by Google

new treaty to be proposed for their acceptance. Its object was to place the relationship of the two Governments on a more satisfactory footing, to substitute a cession of territory for the annual tribute, and to punish the hostile designs which had been manifested by certain of the Ameers. They were to be deprived of some of the districts they had formerly wrested from the Nabob of Bhawulpore, and he was to be rewarded by the restoration of them for the exemplary fidelity he had manifested during the Afghan crisis. The treaties reached Sir Charles Napier on the 12th November, when Major Outram found that they prescribed the sequestration of lands to the value of nearly four lacs in excess of those which he had proposed, and which it had been determined to take as a substitute for the tribute and as the penalty of disloyalty. They likewise deprived the Ameers of the regal prerogative of coining money. He attributed these additional demands to inadvertence, and requested Sir Charles Napier to bring the subject before Lord Ellenborough again, but ten weeks were allowed to elapse before the reference was made. The Governor-General admitted the error, and directed that it should be rectified, but his despatch did not reach the camp till after the battle of Meanee and the ruin of the Ameers. With regard to the new treaties, he had expressly instructed Sir Charles Napier to negotiate them with the Ameers, and not to carry them into effect until they had been concluded and ratified. Two days after they were received, Sir Charles Napier invited Meer Roostum to discuss them at a conference, but under the insidious advice of Ali Morad, he failed to attend it. A fortnight passed without any further communication regarding them with any of the Ameers, either of Upper or Lower Sinde, but on the 1st December the General informed Meer Roostum and his associates, that he had received the draft of a treaty signed by the Governor-General, which he now presented for their acceptance and guidance, and that in obedience to his instructions, he should proceed at once to occupy the territories indicated therein. The Ameers of

Digitized by Google

Khyrpore sent their vakeels to protest against the charge of disloyalty which had been brought against them, and to express, generally, their willingness to agree to the treaty dictated by the British Government, although they considered the terms unjust and oppressive. Within three days, and before they had signed the treaty, or had been allowed an opportunity of discussing its conditions, Sir Charles Napier sequestrated the whole of the territory extending from Roree to the confines of Bhawulpore, which embraced the lands Lord Ellenborough had inadvertently included in the draft of the treaty. At the same time, he issued a proclamation forbidding the ryots to pay any rents to the Ameer after the 1st of January. These estates belonged to the feudatories of the Ameers, the Belochee chiefs, who were entirely dependent on them for their means of subsistence. Meer Roostum remonstrated against this wholesale confiscation of his territories before he had signed any treaty, and added with great simplicity that the English possessions extended over thousands of miles, while the whole of his territories would not be sufficient for the maintenance of a single sahib. An idle rumour had reached the General that the Ameers intended to make a night attack on his camp, and he immediately threatened Meer Roostum to march on his capital and destroy it and transplant the inhabitants. To this menace the Ameer meekly replied, "God knows we have no intention of opposing the English, nor a thought of war or fighting—we have not the power. Ever since my possessions were guaranteed to me and my posterity by the British Government under a formal treaty, I have considered myself a dependent of theirs, and thought myself secure."

Ali Morad and the "Turban," 1842.

These violent proceedings were evidently prompted by the nefarious intrigues and the consummate villainy of Ali Morad. The office of Rais, or lord paramount, was the highest dignity in Upper Sinde, and had long been enjoyed by Meer Roostum, then in his eighty-fifth year, who was venerated alike by the chiefs and the people, and held in high estimation by all the British officers

Digitized by Google

who had been connected with Sinde, for his invariable fidelity. The succession to this office, of which the Turban was the symbol, belonged by the usage of the country to his brother Ali Morad, who was, with the exception of Shere Mahomed of Meerpore, the ablest of the Ameers, but the personification of subtlety and perfidy. He was anxious to make sure of this honour, which Meer Roostum was desirous of bestowing on his own son, and our subsequent proceedings in Sinde may be traced in a great measure to the infamous means which he adopted to accomplish his object. On the 23rd November he obtained an interview with Sir Charles Napier, and, with that quick discernment of character for which the natives of India are distinguished, ascertained that his temper combined the elements of credulity and impulsiveness. He persuaded the General that all the chiefs were hostile to British interests, with the exception of himself and one of the Ameers of Hyderabad, and he succeeded in obtaining the promise of the Turban after the death of Meer Roostum. But he was anxious to obtain possession of it at once, and this object could be gained only by placing the old Ameer in a position of hostility to the British Government. With ingenious malignity he laboured on the one hand to draw his brother into some act of indiscretion which might compromise him, and on the other hand endeavoured to inflame the mind of the British General against him by constant misrepresentations. Through his influence three haughty and menacing messages were sent in succession to Meer Roostum by Sir Charles, and that venerable chief proposed to wait on him to offer a personal explanation. Sir Charles was induced to refuse the interview, because "it would be embarrassing," but advised him to proceed to his brother's residence, not without a hope that he might be prevailed on to resign the Turban without delay. "I send you this letter," he wrote, "by your own brother; listen to his advice; trust to his care. If you go to him, you may either remain, or I will send an escort to conduct you to my camp." This advice had all the force of a command, and Meer Roostum accordingly

Digitized by Google

repaired to Ali Morad's fortress at Deejee, and on the 20th December wrote to Sir Charles that of his own free will he had resigned the Turban, together with the control of his army, his forts, and his country to Ali Morad. Sir Charles informed the Governor-General, on the assurance of that intriguer, that this resignation had been written in the most formal manner in a Koran before all the religious men collected to witness it; but added that he was not without a suspicion that it had been obtained by fraud and violence, and that he was resolved on a personal interview with the old Ameer. This intention he communicated to Ali Morad, who was anxious to prevent the meeting, and rode over in haste to Deejee, roused his brother at midnight, and urged him to take flight in order to avoid Sir Charles Napier, who, he said, was coming the next day to make him prisoner; the terrified old chief accordingly escaped in haste to the camp of his relations twelve miles distant. Sir Charles immediately issued a proclamation to the Ameers and people of Sinde, in which he charged Meer Roostum with having insulted and defied the Governor-General by departing from his brother's roof, and announced his determination to maintain Ali Morad as the justly constituted chieftain of the Talpoora family. Meer Roostum lost no time in sending his minister to the General to put him in possession of the truth, and to assure him that Ali Morad had placed him in durance in his fort and had extorted the resignation of the Turban, and had subsequently prompted him to escape by flight the captivity with which he was menaced. To this message Sir Charles sent an arrogant reply, charging the Ameer with subterfuge and falsehood. "I do not," he said, "understand such double conduct, and will not allow you to take shelter under such misrepresentations. I no longer consider you the chief of the Talpooras, nor will I treat with you as such, nor with those who consider you the Rais." The resignation said to have been written in the Koran was a forgery, and the assemblage of holy men to witness it an audacious fiction. Under this deed Ali Morad claimed lands of the value of six lacs of

Digitized by Google

rupees a-year, as belonging to the Turban, and the abstraction of this property, combined with the sequestrations of Sir Charles Napier, left an income of only six lacs, out of twenty, for the support of eighteen Ameers, and their thirty sons, and all their feudatory chiefs.

Emamgur, 1843.

To this wholesale spoliation the Ameers of Upper Sinde could offer no resistance. Their military force consisted of about two thousand men, under the command of the son and nephew of Meer Roostum, and they had never dreamed of offering any opposition to the British General. But there was a fort in the desert, Emamgur, belonging to Meer Mahomed, who had not given any cause of offence to the British authorities. Owing to its inaccessible position, it does not appear ever to have been captured, and Sir Charles considering it to be the Gibraltar of Upper Sinde, was determined to show the chiefs, as he said, that "neither their deserts nor their negotiations could intercept the progress of the British army." On the 5th January he commenced his march into the desert with fifty horsemen, two 24-pounders, and three hundred and fifty Europeans, mounted on camels, and after traversing the arid waste for four days without seeing the face of an enemy, reached the fort on the 9th of that month. It was abandoned on his approach, and the fortifications were blown up with the powder they contained. The Duke of Wellington pronounced the expedition "one of the most curious military feats he had ever known to be performed." It was unquestionably a gallant exploit, but as there was no declaration of war, and as we had no differences with the chief to whom the fort belonged, it was an act of wanton aggression.

Conference with the Ameers, 1843.

Sir Charles Napier had ordered the Ameers of Upper and Lower Sinde to meet Major Outram at Khyrpore to discuss and sign the treaties, and invested him with full powers, but directed him to listen to no remonstrance regarding the Turban, or the lands which Ali Morad had seized. Major Outram pressed the omission of

Digitized by Google

the clause regarding the coinage, because the right to coin money was the most cherished prerogative of royalty in the east, and, likewise, because the image of the Queen was an emblem forbidden by the Mahomedan creed; but Sir Charles replied that the orders of Lord Ellenborough on this subject were imperative and irreversible. By the contrivance of Ali Morad, Meer Roostum and his brother Ameers were prevented from attending the meeting, and only two of the agents of the Ameers of Lower Sinde made their appearance; with the concurrence of Sir Charles, Major Outram therefore transferred the conference to Hyderabad, and fixed it for the 28th January. Two days after, the vakeels of the Ameers of Hyderabad arrived in the camp, bearing the seals of their masters, with full authority to affix them to the treaties. If they had been allowed to carry out their instructions there would have been a peaceful solution of all differences, but Sir Charles Napier peremptorily refused them permission to execute the deed, and directed them to return to Hyderabad, in company with the Ameers of Upper Sinde, who were informed that they would be treated as enemies if they refused to proceed thither. This order was issued under the crafty advice of Ali Morad, whose object was to create embarrassments, well knowing that the Ameers of Lower Sinde dreaded the appearance of the despoiled princes at their capital, lest it should inflame the minds of the Belochee chiefs, who were flocking to it with their followers.

Conference at Hyderabad, 1843.

The conference was held on the arrival of Major Outram at Hyderabad. The Ameers denied that they had infringed the treaties. They repudiated the hostile correspondence, and maintained that they had never affixed their seals to the letters said to have been addressed to the Boogtie chief and to the ruler of the Punjab. They demanded that these documents should be produced and examined in their presence, but were informed that they were with the Governor-General. Meer Roostum again asserted that he had been placed under restraint by Ali Morad, and

Digitized by Google

that his seal had been affixed to the deed of resignation by force. Several conferences were subsequently held, at which the Ameers assured the Major that the Belochee troops now assembled at the capital were not under control, and that the continued advance of Sir Charles Napier, who was marching on Hyderabad, must inevitably lead to a collision. They assented to the conditions of the treaties, although they were deemed harsh; they were ready even to relinquish the large territory which Sir Charles had confiscated, but they required the assurance of Major Outram that the Turban and the territory seized by Ali Morad should be restored to Meer Roostum, if he could substantiate the allegation of violence. If this concession were made, they thought that they might succeed in restraining the passions of the troops. It was beyond the power of Major Outram to assent to this proposal. On the 12th February, he attended a durbar in the fort, when all the Ameers affixed their seals to the treaties. The city, however, was in a state of commotion; the sight of the fugitive and disinherited princes of Upper Sinde, and, more especially, of the venerable Meer Roostum, deposed from the chiefship and stripped of his territory by his perfidious brother, exasperated the inhabitants and the Belochee chiefs beyond endurance On issuing from the fort after the treaties had been executed, Major Outram and his officers were surrounded by a dense crowd of citizens and soldiers pouring execrations on the British name, and they would inevitably have fallen a sacrifice to popular fury, if they had not been protected by a guard under the command of the most influential chiefs, who refused to leave them till they were safe within the gates of the Residency. The next day a deputation waited on Major Outram to state that the Belochee troops were wrought up to such a state of desperation that the Ameers were unable to restrain them, and could no longer be answerable for their conduct. "We have given you," they said, "all that you wanted for yourselves and for the Nabob of Bhawulpore without a murmur. Promise to restore the lands which Ali Morad has seized, or permit us

Digitized by Google

to recover them ourselves;" but Major Outram could only assure them that the Ameers must be held responsible for the conduct of their subjects. They entreated him to retire from the Residency to a place of greater safety, but he replied that he should neither move an inch, nor place an additional sentry at his door. On the morning of the 15th February, masses of infantry and cavalry came down upon the Residency and assailed it with great resolution, but they were effectually repulsed by a small body of native troops, and a company of the 22nd Foot, which happened to be present. After a gallant defence of three hours against overwhelming numbers, Major Outram retired with the loss of seventeen killed, wounded, and missing, to the armed steamer anchored in the river about five hundred yards distant. It is important to the interests of historical truth to correct the groundless assertion made on the authority of Sir Charles Napier in Lord Ellenborough's proclamation of the 5th March, that "the Ameers signed the new treaty on the 14th February, and treacherously attacked the residence of the British Commissioners with a large force on the following day." The treaty was signed on the 12th, and for two days the Ameers continued to importune Major Outram to retire from the Residency, because they were unable to curb the indignation of their feudatories, but, true to his chivalrous feeling, he resolved to remain and brave the danger.

The battle of Meanee, 17th February, 1843.

The attack on the Residency closed all negotiation, and rendered an appeal to arms inevitable. No course was left to Sir Charles Napier but to march to Hyderabad, and to join issue with the national force which had flocked thither in augmented numbers when it was perceived that he continued to advance after the treaties had been signed. On the morning of the 17th February he came upon the Belochee army posted at Meanee, about six miles from Hyderabad, numbering more than 20,000 men, while his own force did not exceed 2,700. The Belochees took up a strong position, with the dry bed of the Fullailee in

Digitized by Google

front, and a wood on each flank defended by fifteen guns. During three hours they maintained their ground with the greatest courage and resolution, and being excellent swordsmen, repeatedly rushed down the bank on the British ranks, after having discharged their matchlocks. The fortune of the day was at length decided by a charge of cavalry on the right of the enemy, while another body of horse fell simultaneously on their camp, spreading dismay in the rear of the masses opposed to the British infantry. The Belochees disputed every inch of ground, and gradually retired from the field, leaving their camp, their artillery, and all their military stores in the hands of the victors. Braver men never rushed on death, and never on any Indian battle-field had the gallantry of British troops, or the generalship of a British commander, been more conspicuously displayed. No quarter was asked or given, and the loss of the Belochees in killed and wounded was computed at 5,000, while that of the British force, owing to the admirable tactics of Sir Charles Napier, did not exceed 257, of whom nineteen were officers. The victory was as complete as it was brilliant, but a fresh body of 10,000 Belochees arrived the next day, and Shere Mahomed, the Ameer of Meerpore, the ablest and most martial of the princes, was in the neighbourhood with about the same number of men, who had taken no part in the engagement. Sir Charles was without the means of laying siege to the fort of Hyderabad, and would have been constrained to retire to the banks of the Indus and throw up entrenchments, while he awaited the arrival of a battering train. This appearance of weakness might have marred the prospects of the campaign. From these embarrassments he was happily relieved by the voluntary submission of the Ameers, and the surrender of the fortress. He entered Hyderabad on the 20th February, and obtained possession of the accumulated treasures and jewels of the Talpoora family, which were distributed as prize among the captors. Major Outram refused to accept his share of the plunder, acquired in what he considered an unjust war, and

Digitized by Google

distributed it, to the extent of 30,000 rupees, among the charitable institutions of India. Lord Ellenborough, soon after receiving intelligence of the victory at Meanee, issued a proclamation annexing the kingdom of Sinde, "fertile as Egypt," to the Company's territories, abolishing slavery, and opening the Indus to the navigation and commerce of all nations.

Second battle; 22nd March, 1843.

The gallant Shere Mahomed, of Meerpore, who, when Hyderabad was threatened by Sir John Keane and General Cotton in 1839, had come to the rescue with his coffin and his shroud, employed himself in collecting together the scattered bands of Belochees, to make another effort for the independence of his country. He appeared in the neighbourhood of Hyderabad, near the village of Dubba, on the 22nd March, and Sir Charles Napier, who had, in the meantime, received reinforcements which raised his force to 6,000, found the Ameer encamped with about 20,000 men in a strong position behind the dry bed of the Fullailee. The British artillery played on the enemy's centre, till it began to waver, the cavalry charged the left, and the 22nd Foot rushed up the bank of the river, under a galling fire of matchlocks without returning a shot, till within forty paces of the entrenchments, which they stormed with a noble devotion. The field was gallantly contested on both sides; the Belochees fought with exemplary courage; the British officers and men emulated the example of their heroic commander, who moved about with the utmost composure where the shots were flying thickest. The victory was as complete as that of Meanee, and Shere Mahomed fled with only a small body of followers. A detachment was sent into the desert to take possession of the fortress of Omercote, famed as the birthplace of the Emperor Akbar. It was found deserted and Sir Charles Napier soon after announced to the Governor-General the complete subjugation of the country, which he made the subject of a pun, and, in reference to the charge of injustice with which the conquest was universally assailed, wrote *peccavi*, "I have sinned" (Sinde). During the year, there were some slight

Digitized by Google

ebullitions of discontent, but they were subdued without difficulty, and no conquered province in India has been found to acquiesce more rapidly and more completely in the establishment of British authority. Every effort to raise a local force in Afghanistan to sustain our authority had been defeated by the inveterate hostility and treachery of those who enlisted; but the Belochees entered cheerfully into the service of their conquerors, exhibited a feeling of invariable loyalty, and did not hesitate to embark on foreign service to garrison their transmarine settlements.

Remarks on the conquest of Sinde, 1843.

The achievements of the British army in Sinde, which were naturally contrasted with the cowardice and imbecility exhibited in Afghanistan, created a feeling of just exultation in India; but it was clouded by the conviction that the rupture with the Ameers was unjustifiable, and the war unrighteous. Lord Ellenborough, at a subsequent period, drew up an elaborate vindication of these proceedings, but it only served to place the weakness of the cause in a more prominent light. There is no doubt that he was keenly sensible of the injury inflicted on British prestige in India and in Asia by our disasters in Afghanistan, and was quick to resent any manifestations of hostile or even equivocal conduct in our allies, which could be traced to a suspicion of the decay of our power. Such indications of disaffection had been exhibited at the native Courts upon every former occasion of our reverses, even far more palpably than in the present instance in Sinde: but no Governor-General had deemed it necessary to visit them with a heavy retribution. They had always disappeared when victory was again associated with our arms, and they would have died a natural death in Sinde if the management of affairs had been in other hands than those of Sir Charles Napier. Lord Ellenborough, unwisely, placed indiscriminate confidence in his judgment, and regulated his own proceedings by the information he communicated. Many extenuating circumstances and many documents which could not have failed to modify his opinions were withheld from him,

Digitized by Google

and the fullest credit may be given to the assertion of Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Control, that the conquest of Sinde would never have taken place if Lord Ellenborough had been in full possession of the real facts, and had been cognisant of the misdeeds of Ali Morad. Sir Charles entered upon his duties with a strong prejudice against the Ameers, and he was the victim of a foregone conclusion. At the beginning of his Sinde career, he remarked, "We only want a pretext to coerce the Ameers," and after examining the letters said to be treasonable, affirmed "they have given a pretext, they have broken treaties. The more powerful Government will at no distant period swallow up the weaker, and it would be better to come to the result at once, if it can be done with honesty." On a subsequent occasion he wrote, "We have no right to seize Sinde, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, and humane piece of rascality it will be." The rascality is more apparent than the advantage, except to the captors, to whom it brought a rich draught of prize money, of which seven lacs fell to the share of the General-in-chief. On the finances of India it inflicted a loss of two crores and a-half of rupees in the course of fifteen years. The war was the result of Sir Charles's rash and impetuous proceedings, but it must not be forgotten that he was surrounded by the creatures, and stimulated by the villainous intrigues, of Ali Morad. The conquest of Sinde admits of no vindication. It is a blot on our national escutcheon, but it stands alone among the transactions which have enlarged the boundaries of the British empire in India, and it is unjust to yield to an indolent dislike of investigation and pass a general censure on our career for an exceptional transgression. The treatment which the Ameers experienced forms one of the darkest pages in the history of British India. State policy might dictate their removal from a country where they had once been masters, but it was nevertheless an act of cruelty to inflict an indiscriminate banishment on these unhappy princes, many of whom were innocent even of a hostile thought, and

Digitized by Google

to consign them to a distant and dreary exile, separated from all those associations which form the charm of existence.

The mutinies, 1844.

For the first time in the history of British India, the expansion of the empire led to a mutiny of the sepoys. Sinde became a British province, and they lost the extra allowances which had been granted to them while on active service in an enemy's country. The sepoy could not comprehend why he should be deprived of any portion of his pay because he had assisted in adding a new province to the dominions of his masters, and he became insubordinate. In February, 1844, the 34th Native Infantry, which had been warned for service in Sinde, refused to march without the additional allowances granted to troops proceeding beyond the Indus. The 7th Bengal cavalry, and several companies of Bengal artillery followed the example on the line of march, and were ordered back to their former stations. The 69th and the 4th, which were ordered in their stead to the frontier, refused to embark in the boats provided for them at Ferozepore. The 64th at Loodiana exhibited equal reluctance for the service, and was countermarched to Benares. On reaching Umbala, the native officers came forward and assured the General commanding the division that the regiment had thought better of it, and was ready to proceed to Sinde. The Commander-in-chief, elated with this return of loyalty, imprudently determined to recompense it by a promise of higher pay and pension, and greater indulgences of furlough; but when the regiment arrived at Moodkee, the men broke out in open mutiny, and endeavoured to seize the colours, but were induced by the flattery of the commandant to resume their march. Two days after, the despatch of the Adjutant-General which announced the concessions made by the Commander-in-chief, under the impression that the corps was animated with a feeling of loyalty, was received in camp; but though it was then in a state of complete rebellion, the weak Colonel not only translated the letter into Hindostanee and circulated it among the sepoys, but aggravated the imprudence already com-

Digitized by Google

mitted by promising the batta they had received under General Pollock in Afghanistan. On the arrival of the regiment at Shikarpore, the extra allowances, to which the sanction of the Government of India had never been obtained, were withheld, and the men again broke out into mutiny. The station was under the command of General Hunter, an officer held in the highest estimation throughout the native army, but he was unable to restore discipline and was openly insulted and hustled on the parade. The sepoys affirmed that they had been allured to Sinde by false pretences, that they had been promised "Pollock's batta" but had received eight rupees instead of twelve. As there was unfortunately too much reason for this complaint, he marched the regiment back to the Indus, and agreed to condone the offence of all but the ringleaders. The mutiny was hushed up, and the Colonel cashiered. Finding it impracticable to garrison Sinde with a Bengal force, the Government turned to the Madras army which had never manifested any hesitation to embark on foreign service. But the Madras army was not free from the taint of insubordination; and, during the previous six years, there had been repeated instances of mutiny on various occasions, and at more than one station. The 47th was under orders for Moulmein, a station across the bay on the Tenasserim coast, where the sepoys had always enjoyed extra allowances. It was determined to change their destination and embark them for Bombay on their way to Sinde, with the promise of the same additional pay they had enjoyed when crossing the sea. The assurance thus given by the Governor in ignorance of the regulations of the Bengal army, was of no validity, and the men, finding on their arrival at Bombay that their expectations were disappointed, broke out in open mutiny on parade. The leaders were placed in confinement, and a small advance of money was served out which kept down the spirit of resistance, but it was deemed hazardous again to attempt the experiment of despatching Madras regiments to Sinde.

Digitized by Google

The province was made over to the Bombay army, and satisfactory arrangements were made regarding the allowances of the troops. These repeated explosions clearly demonstrated that the feeling of subordination was gradually becoming relaxed in the minds of the sepoys, and afforded a premonition of that climax of mutiny which, thirteen years later, swept away the whole of the Bengal army.

Progress of affairs at Gwalior, 1842.

Lord Ellenborough's announcement of the victory of Meanee, and the subjugation of Sinde, was dated from the palace of Agra on the 5th March. On the same day an order was issued to concentrate a large force on the frontier of Sindia's territories, at a little distance from that city, to support the authority of the regent, recently appointed under the auspices of the Governor-General. Before the close of the year two battles were fought which placed the whole of the Gwalior kingdom at the disposal of the British Government. Resuming the thread of events at that durbar, after the death of Dowlut Rao Sindia, we remark that his widow, Baeza Bye, adopted Junkojee Sindia in 1827, and that he died on the 7th February, 1843, without issue, and without having named a successor. In 1838 he had taken for his second wife, Tara Bye, now in her thirteenth year. Immediately upon his death she adopted a boy of the age of eight, not without the full concurrence of the chiefs and of the Governor-General, and bestowed on him the royal title of Gyajee. The durbar, comprising the most influential men in the state, lay, military and ecclesiastical, was anxious that the government of the country should continue to be administered by the existing council of ministers. Lord Ellenborough, however, considering the geographical position of the kingdom, which consisted of many straggling districts, impinging in every direction for many hundred miles on the territories of the Company and its allies, and bearing in mind also the extreme youth of the raja and his adoptive mother, deemed it important that the management of the state should rest upon the responsibility of a single individual as regent. Two candidates appeared for this dignified office, the Mama

Digitized by Google

Sahib, the uncle of the late raja, and Dada Khasjee, the hereditary chamberlain and keeper of the jewel office. The claims of the Dada were strongly supported by the young queen and the ladies of the court, but Lord Ellenborough directed the Resident to inform the durbar that he should prefer the appointment of the Mama Sahib, who was accordingly installed on the 23rd February. This interference in the appointment of the minister involved the necessity of giving him the support of the British Government, while it also rendered him an object of increasing aversion to an influential party in the state, by whom his rival was preferred. The ranee and her partizans, irritated at their disappointment, set every engine to work to thwart and harass the regent, and to throw his administration into confusion. It was in the prospect of being obliged to afford him material support, that Lord Ellenborough ordered the assembly of troops on the 5th March, but the receipt of more favourable intelligence from Gwalior induced him to countermand it three days after.

State of the Gwalior Army, 1843.

The great source of disquietude at Gwalior was the state of the army, consisting of about 30,000 infantry and 10,000 horse, with 200 pieces of cannon, commanded for the most part by Christian officers of European descent. It was not in any sense a Mahratta force corresponding with that of the first Sindia and animated with a strong feeling of national enthusiasm, but a mercenary body recruited from the martial population of the provinces of Rajpootana, Oude, and the Company's territories. It was out of all proportion, not only to the requirements of the kingdom, which was protected from external invasion by its British alliance, but also to its revenues, of which it absorbed more than two-thirds. The Government of Gwalior had made repeated attempts to reduce its numbers with a view to the tranquillity of the country and the relief of the treasury, but the troops peremptorily refused to permit any of the corps to be paid up and disbanded, or any vacancy in their ranks to remain empty. They were, moreover, always in arrears, some-

Digitized by Google

times to the extent of ten months' pay, which necessarily served to increase the feeling of arrogance and insubordination. The army was in fact too large and too strong for the state. One of the battalions of a brigade of infantry under a native commandant, had recently committed great excesses in Malwa, and in consequence of a strong remonstrance from the Resident, he was ordered to repair alone to Gwalior to answer for his conduct; but he chose to march up contumaciously at the head of his battalion, and the whole brigade was immediately infected with a mutinous feeling. Lord Ellenborough pressed on the regent the importance of dealing vigorously with this spirit of rebellion, and offered him the assistance of a British force, but he prudently declined the proposal, from the conviction that the appearance of foreign soldiers in the country would raise a flame in the army, and inevitably lead to a collision.

Dismissal of the Regent, 1843.

The opposition to the regent was organized in the zenana, chiefly through the intrigues of a very clever slave girl, who had acquired a complete ascendency over the childish mind of the ranee. The slave was at length induced by a large donation to withdraw from the palace, and the Dada, who headed the adverse faction, was advised to proceed to Benares with the bones of the deceased raja, as he had conveyed the bones of Dowlut Rao Sindia sixteen years before to the same holy city; but he declined the insidious proposal, well knowing that he would not be permitted to return to Gwalior when he had once quitted it. To strengthen his influence at the court, the Regent betrothed the young raja to his own niece, but the palace confederacy assured the ranee that this alliance would completely undermine her influence, as indeed it was intended to do, and ten days after the ceremony had taken place, she sent abruptly to inform the Resident that, having various causes of complaint against the regent, she had thought fit to dismiss him from his office. The Resident energetically remonstrated with the self-willed girl on the folly of this course, but she turned a deaf ear to

Digitized by Google

all his representations. He then requested permission to call up a British detachment to support the cause of the regent, but Lord Ellenborough refused to sanction this movement, though he caused intimation to be given to the ranee, that it was indispensable to establish a Government at Gwalior capable of maintaining tranquillity along the extensive line of its frontier, and that it was impossible for him to permit "the growth of a lax system of rule generating habits of plunder." Lord Ellenborough had lost all confidence in the regent, who ought in his opinion to have been able, with the aid of the army and the countenance of the British authorities, to baffle the machinations of the palace. "You have proved yourself," he said, "unfit to manage men or women, and a minister at Gwalior must manage both." The regent was violently expelled the country, and the revengeful Dada would have deprived him of his liberty, as well as of his property, as he passed through the independent state of Seronge, but for the interposition of the Governor-General. The degradation of the minister who had been supported by the Government of India was an insult which Lord Ellenborough was not disposed to overlook, and the Resident was desired to withdraw from the capital with all his establishment, and to retire to Dholpore. The durbar had not forgotten that the retirement of Colonel Collins in 1803 was immediately followed by the battle of Assye and the dismemberment of the kingdom, and every effort was made to induce the Resident to return to the capital; but the Governor-General steadily refused to give his consent.

Confusion at Gwalior, 1843.

On the expulsion of the regent, the ranee assumed the ostensible management of the state, and held durbars daily, but all real power was in the hands of the Dada, who had secured the females of the zenana by lavish gifts of money and land. He manifested his hostility to the Government of India by expelling from office those who were favorable to it, and installing those who were known to regard it with aversion. The most influential nobles held aloof

Digitized by Google

from him, and he never moved out of the palace, where he considered himself secure, without the protection of a strong guard. In this state of political confusion, the army, which was concentrated at the capital and courted by all parties, became more arrogant and overbearing than ever, and the soldiers of the artillery insulted their officers and expelled them from the camp. The ranee continued to importune the Resident to return, but he was instructed to inform her that until the Dada, the author of all these complications, and the only obstacle to the restoration of friendly relations between the two states, was removed from her counsels, he was not at liberty to resume his functions at the capital. This communication was delivered, in common with all others, to the Dada, but he improperly withheld it from the ranee. Considering, however, that he was the chief minister of the state, and the sole medium of communication with her, the transgression will appear very venial, but the Governor-General thought fit to regard it as an "offence of the most criminal character against the state of Gwalior," and peremptorily demanded that he should be committed to the custody of the Resident. The ranee replied that she was prepared to deprive him of his office and authority, and to place him under restraint within the Gwalior territories, but that it would be derogatory to the dignity of the crown to surrender him at the dictation of a foreign power. Three of the ablest and most influential of the nobles, anxious to preserve the alliance and friendship of the British Government, formed a junction with one of the brigades hostile to the Dada, and, after having besieged the palace for three days, obtained possession of his person. The capital presented the appearance of two hostile encampments. The rival parties were equally balanced in numbers and strength, but the command of the treasury gave the ranee a preponderating influence. They came at length to an open rupture, which resulted in the loss of fifty or sixty lives. Soon after, the Dada contrived to effect his escape, and again assumed the management of affairs, issued eight months' pay to the troops, and made pre-

Digitized by Google

parations to oppose any movement of British troops which the Governor-General might order.

Lord Ellenborough's Minute, Nov. 1st, 1843.

On the 1st November, Lord Ellenborough recorded a Minute on the state of affairs at Gwalior, which furnishes a key to his subsequent proceedings. It was exceptionally free from paradox and eccentricity, and, if viewed either with reference to the soundness of its political views, or to the vigour of its style, may be considered one of the ablest state papers on the records of the Council. Whether forced on us, he said, by circumstances, or the settled object of our arms and policy, our position in India is that of the paramount and controlling power, and it is therefore impossible to take a partial and insulated view of our relations with any one state within that limit. To recede from that position would endanger our own existence, and bring upon all the states now dependent on us the most afflicting calamities. It would let loose all the elements of confusion, and lead the several states to seek redress for daily occurring grievances against each other, not from the superintending justice of the British Government, but from the armed reprisals of the injured; and the countries which, under our protection, have enjoyed many of the advantages of peace would again be exposed to devastation. He then passed in review the transactions of the year at Gwalior where the expulsion of the regent, nominated with our concurrence, and the elevation of his rival, was an affront of the gravest character, and where, moreover, an army of 30,000 men, with a very numerous artillery, under the direction of a person who had obtained his post and could only retain it in despite of the British Government, lay within a few marches of the capital of the north-west provinces. "Still, under ordinary circumstances, we might perhaps have waited upon time, and trusted to the disunion manifest among the chiefs, and the usual vicissitudes of an Indian court, to restore our influence at Gwalior. But the events which have recently occurred at Lahore will not permit the resort to a policy

Digitized by Google

suited only to a state of general tranquillity in India." In the Punjab both the sovereign and his son had been murdered in the month of September at the instigation of Dhyan Sing, who was himself slain on the same day by the assassin he had employed to destroy his master. Heera Sing, the son of Dhyan Sing, revenged the death of his father, proclaimed Duleep Sing sovereign, and endeavoured to gain over the army by the addition of two rupees and a-half to the monthly pay of each soldier. Amidst these convulsions and massacres the army had become the dominant power in the state, and Lord Ellenborough justly remarked that "with an army of 70,000 men within three marches of the Sutlege, confident in its own strength, proud of its various successes against its neighbours, desirous of war and of plunder, and under no discipline or control, it would be unpardonable were we not to take every possible precaution against its hostility, and no precaution appears to be more necessary than that of rendering our rear and our communications secure, by the re-establishment of a friendly Government at Gwalior." It will admit of no controversy that while this large army, composed of the bravest soldiers in India, and its three hundred guns, complete masters of the Government, and eager to pour down on our territories, lay across the Sutlege, and another powerful army with two hundred guns, trained by European officers and equally beyond the control of the state, lay within sixty-five miles of Agra, the British empire was in a position of extreme peril. The Governor-General would have incurred a serious responsibility if he had been indifferent to the importance of reducing the Gwalior army before the collision with the Sikhs, which was evidently inevitable, came on. Lord Ellenborough had continued for two months to press the surrender of the Dada on the ranee, and the Resident had assured her that nothing short of it would satisfy the British Government. "If," he said, "the Governor-General, who is now on his way to Agra, should not find the Dada there on his arrival, God alone knows what orders may be issued."

Digitized by Google

Proceedings of Lord Ellenborough, 1843.

Lord Ellenborough arrived at Agra on the 11th December, and finding that the Dada had not quitted Gwalior, wrote the next day to inform the ranee that it would have been gratifying to him if her conduct had enabled him to look forward to a long continuance of friendship between the states, but her Highness had unfortunately listened to other counsels and the British authorities could neither permit the existence within the territories of Sindia of an unfriendly Government, nor allow those territories to remain without a Government willing and able to maintain order, and to preserve the relations of amity with its neighbours. Compelled by the conduct her Highness had been advised to adopt, he was obliged to look to other means than those of friendly remonstrance to maintain the relations of the two states in their integrity. He had directed the British armies to advance, and would not arrest their movements till he had full security for the future tranquillity of the common frontier. The Commander-in-chief, Sir Hugh Gough, accordingly, commenced his march towards Gwalior, and the Dada was immediately sent to Dholpore with a letter from the ranee to request that as the wishes of the Governor-General had been complied with, the progress of the army might be arrested. On the 18th December, Lord Ellenborough replied to her communication, repeating his former remarks on the necessity of a strong Government able to control its own subjects, and he required that the Gwalior army, which was to all intents the master of the Government it pretended to serve, should be reduced within reasonable limits, and that the strength of the British contingent should be increased. The completion of this measure in a satisfactory manner by the Maharanee and the durbar, would render the advance of the British armies no longer requisite, but they would be at hand to give aid to her Highness, if necessary, in effecting this purpose. Instead, however, of resting the justification of these proceedings on the undeniable argument of an imperative necessity, Lord Ellenborough

Digitized by Google

adopted the feeble plea of the duty he owed "the Maharaja, whose person and whose rights as the successor of Dowlut Rao Sindia were placed by treaty under the protection of the British Government." The treaty thus unexpectedly brought forward was that of Boorhanpore, forced on Sindia by Lord Wellesley in 1804, and negotiated by Colonel Malcolm. It provided that a subsidiary force of 6,000 men should be organized on Sindia's behoof, and that "it should be ready at all times, on the requisition of the Maharaja, to execute services of importance, such as the care of his person, his heirs, and successors, and the overawing and chastisement of rebels, or exciters of disturbance in his dominions." But as this subsidiary force was not to be paid from his treasury, or even stationed within his territories, it was never called into existence. The treaty itself became a dead letter from the day it was signed, and no reference was subsequently made to it, either by the Mahratta court, or by the Government of India. When a new treaty was formed with Sindia by Lord Hastings, in 1817, although previous and succeeding treaties were recapitulated and confirmed, that of Boorhanpore was unnoticed. It was this obsolete treaty which Lord Ellenborough now restored to life, after it had lain in the grave for forty years, and on the strength of it ordered two armies into the Gwalior territories, not only without the requisition of the raja, but in spite of the remonstrances of his Government.

Deputation from Gwalior—March of the army, 1843.

The ranee and raja, finding that the Governor-General was moving down with a large force to the Chumbul, the boundary of the two states, determined to advance to the frontier town of Dholpore to meet him; and a deputation of three of the most influential chiefs of the durbar, friendly to the Company's Government, was sent forward to arrange the interview. They suggested that the queen and the prince, who were then on the eve of leaving the capital, should wait on Lord Ellenborough in his present encampment, which was the spot where all former Governors-General had awaited the visit of the Gwalior rajas. Lord

Digitized by Google

Ellenborough replied that he could not wait their arrival, and that the army would advance as soon as the whole of the troops had joined it. The chiefs entreated him to reconsider this determination. It was, they said, a question of vital importance, affecting the honour of the house of Sindia, which would be eternally disgraced if, contrary to all precedent, the Governor-General should cross the frontier before the raja had paid his respects to him on British territory. It was in his hands to uphold or to destroy the dynasty of their master; the treaty which had been propounded would occasion no difficulty; it was for him to dictate the terms, it was for them to obey; but they implored him with joined hands to weigh the serious consequences which might result from his crossing the Chumbul with a large force before the interview with the raja. The only reply vouchsafed to this entreaty by the Governor-General was a repetition of the assertion that it was impossible to suspend the progress of the army. The chiefs then proposed that the queen and the prince should meet him at Hingona, about twenty-three miles distant from Gwalior, and sign the treaty, and Lord Ellenborough consented to fix the 26th for the meeting; but the Gwalior troops did not fail to perceive that the advance of the British army was a hostile movement, and would result in depriving them of the power and the position they had acquired, and in consigning them to beggary. All party animosities were hushed before the danger which equally menaced the independence of the state and the existence of the army, and chiefs and soldiers made common cause against the designs of the Governor-General. The Gwalior battalions prevented the ranee and the prince from keeping their appointment at Hingona, and marched out of the capital with exultation, assuring the Resident as they passed, that they were going to drive the English back across the Chumbul.

The battle of Maharajpore, 29th Dec., 1843.

The Governor-General waited in vain two days at Hingona for the royal party, and on the 28th December directed the army to advance upon

Digitized by Google

Gwalior. Sindia's troops had taken up a strong position at Chounda, and the arrangements of Sir Hugh Gough were directed to this point, but, during the night seven battalions of infantry, with twenty guns of heavy calibre, advanced to the village of Maharajpore and entrenched themselves, with their formidable batteries in its front. The Commander-in-chief and the officers of his staff had fallen into the usual error of despising the enemy, and considered them a contemptible rabble, ready to take to flight on the first shot. General Churchill, the Quartermaster-General, who fell gallantly in the action, observed on the day preceding it that the only weapon he should require was a good horsewhip. The progress of the British army was regarded in the light of a military promenade. The Governor-General and the ladies of the chief officers accompanied it on elephants. There was no reconnaissance in the morning, and the enemy's change of position was unknown to Sir Hugh. The cavalcade advanced gaily to Maharajpore where it was intended to breakfast, when a sudden discharge from the masked batteries of the Mahrattas, gave the first intimation of the proximity of Sindia's army. One of the balls struck the ear of the elephant on which the wife of a General was mounted. The Commander-in-chief was required to alter his dispositions in haste, and the battle which ensued was justly characterized as one in which everybody and everything was out of place. The British force numbered about 12,000; that of the enemy amounted to 14,000, but there was no General-in-chief to direct their movements. Each brigade marched out of Gwalior and took up its own position, which it maintained with extraordinary courage and resolution. After the surrender of the Dada, our siege train had been sent back, the heavy guns which accompanied our force were unaccountably left in the rear, and the light field pieces were soon upset by the heavy ordnance of the enemy. Our troops were therefore at once launched on their batteries, which were served with a frantic desperation, as long as there was a gunner left. Even after the capture of the guns the infantry

Digitized by Google

continued to maintain its ground with great determination. Victory was at length secured, not by any professional skill, but simply by the irresistible gallantry of our soldiers, of whom a thousand fell killed and wounded. Lord Ellenborough won his spurs on the field, and was seen moving about with the greatest intrepidity amidst a shower of bullets, distributing money and oranges among the wounded. On the same day, another battle was fought with another portion of the Gwalior force at Punniar, by the troops under the command of General Grey, who had been directed to advance against the capital from the south, while Sir Hugh Gough advanced from the north. It ended in a complete victory.

Battle of Punniar, December 29th, 1843.

New treaty and settlement, 1844.

These victories placed the kingdom of Sindia at the feet of the Governor-General, but he left it entire, and simply suppressed its independence. Two days after the engagement, the young ranee and raja proceeded to the British encampment together with the principal chiefs and the officers of the court. The boy was in a state of great perturbation throughout the interview. The litter of the ranee, closely veiled, was conveyed to a private tent, and Lord Ellenborough seated himself beside it, while the two Mahratta ministers squatted on the carpet and explained his address to her as it was interpreted by Colonel Sleeman, the Resident. Considering that she was not thirteen, she behaved with remarkable self-possession. After alluding to her extreme youth and inexperience, she said she had come out with her adopted son to implore forgiveness for what had occurred, which she attributed to the arrogance of her licentious soldiery. The Governor-General replied that measures must be taken to restore order, and to establish an efficient Government, and he held out a hope of her being permitted to take a share in it; but when the treaty came to be settled she found herself deposed from the office of regent, and consigned to oblivion on a pension of three lacs of rupees a-year. The majority of the raja was fixed at eighteen, and the

Digitized by Google

administration was in the meanwhile committed to a council of regency, consisting of six sirdars, who were required to act implicitly on the advice of the Resident whenever he might think fit to offer it. The turbulent army of the state was reduced to 9,000 men, with thirty-two guns, and so completely had the two battles broken its spirit that it was disbanded in ten days without any appearance of tumult. Many of the soldiers enlisted in the British contingent, which was increased to the number of 10,000, and became, in fact, a compact little army of all arms, with an admirable artillery. In the splendour of its uniform and the superiority of its discipline and efficiency, it eclipsed every other corps, and was called the model force of India. The sepoys were high caste brahmins and rajpoots from the Dooab and Oude, men of athletic forms and lofty carriage, and boundless assumption, and the European officers, selected for their merits, took a pride in maintaining the high standard of their regiments. During the mutiny of 1857, the men butchered their officers, crossed the Jumna, and proceeded to join their rebellious relatives of the Bengal army; and it was this body of troops which boldly encountered General Windham at Cawnpore in November, 1857, and inflicted a severe reverse on our arms; while Sindia and his illustrious minister, the raja Dinkur Rao, remained faithful in their allegiance to the British Government. The policy of breaking up this insubordinate force at Gwalior was abundantly vindicated two years after, when the 70,000 Sikh soldiers alluded to in the Minute of Lord Ellenborough, poured down upon the British territories and shook our power to its foundation. If at that crisis, when our military resources were taxed to their utmost strength to stem the tide of invasion on the Sutlege, the Gwalior army had been in existence, both anxious and ready to co-operate with the Sikhs, the empire of India could scarcely have been saved without a miracle.

Recall of Lord Ellenborough, 15th June, 1844.

Lord Ellenborough returned to Calcutta in March, and, on the 15th June, India was astounded

Digitized by Google

by the intelligence that the Court of Directors had revoked his appointment. The causes of displeasure and anxiety he had given them were not few. His correspondence with the India House had been marked by the absence of that deference which was due to the high position assigned to them in the government of the empire, and his proceedings had often exhibited a contumelious disdain of their authority. He had twice been their superior at the Board of Control in England, and he scarcely realized the fact that in India he was their subordinate, and that it was his duty to obey and not to dictate. He had concentrated his sympathies on the army and treated the civil service, the favourites of Leadenhall Street, with undisguised contempt. The vagary of the Gate Proclamation had exposed the Government of India to the derision of England and Europe, and destroyed all confidence in the sobriety and soundness of Lord Ellenborough's judgment. Since his arrival in India he had dismissed that solicitude for the pursuits of peace in which he once took a pride, and contracted an extreme fondness for warlike exploits and military glory. His administration had presented only a succession of wars and battles. He appeared to the Directors to be without any fixity of purpose, or any definite principles of action, and they were in constant dread of the new embarrassments in which his eccentricities might involve them. They ceased to consider the empire safe in his hands, and, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends in the Ministry, determined to exercise the power they had refused to part with during the recent Charter discussions, and to recall him. His removal was regarded by the army he had caressed with feelings of deep regret, amounting almost to indignation. The community in general, while duly appreciating his many noble qualities, the total absence of nepotism, the patriotic distribution of his patronage, his indefatigable industry, his indomitable resolution, and his great energy and talent, still regarded his removal as an act of unquestionable wisdom. The feelings of the native princes were facetiously,

Digitized by Google

but accurately, described by Sir Henry Lawrence, when he remarked that after hearing of his recall, they ceased, on waking in the morning, to feel their necks to be sure that their heads were still on their shoulders. He embarked for England on the 1st August, and the Sikh war was postponed for a twelvemonth.

Improvements in Lord Ellenborough's time, 1842—44.

Lord Ellenborough's attention was so completely absorbed in war and politics as to leave him little leisure or inclination for the moral, intellectual, or material improvement of the country. But there is a vital principle of progression in the British Government in India which the caprice or indifference of those in authority, either there or in England, can interrupt only for a season. It was during the Government of Lord Ellenborough that the police of the lower provinces was rendered efficient, and two important measures of social improvement, the extinction of slavery, and the abolition of state lotteries, were achieved, chiefly through the exertions of the Vice-President in Council, Mr. Wilberforce Bird. The department of police had long been the opprobrium of the administration. It was a just subject of complaint that while the collectorate, which guarded the pecuniary interests of the state, received every attention from Government, the magistracy and the police, which concerned the interests of the people, were disgracefully neglected and inadequately remunerated. One Magistrate was considered sufficient for a population of a million, and the largest scope was thus afforded for the venality and oppression of the native police officers, whose allowances for half a century had been barely sufficient to cover their travelling expenses. Mr. Bird, following up the liberal views of Lord William Bentinck, established the office of Deputy Magistrate, to which men of every class, caste, and creed were made eligible, and thus indefinitely increased the strength and efficiency of the department. He was likewise successful in his efforts to establish four grades of police *darogas*, the highest of which was endowed with 100 rupees a-month—a wretched pittance at

Digitized by Google

the best—but it was all that could be obtained at the time. State lotteries had been established in the Presidency towns after the example of England, but they were continued long after they had been abandoned at home. The proceeds were appropriated to the material improvement of the towns, though at the expense of their morals. In Calcutta, the profits of the lottery had been hypothecated for many years to the state in payment of the very large advances made to the municipal body for various improvements. Happily, the debt was liquidated, and the money reverted to the treasury during Mr. Bird's tenure of office. It was the province of the local government of Bengal to sanction the half-yearly scheme of the lotteries; and in 1843 Mr. Bird availed himself of his position to suspend the usual order, pending a reference to the Court of Directors, well knowing that when a noxious system of this character, long since condemned in England, had once been intermitted in India, it would be impossible to revive it. He also drafted an Act which, after describing lotteries as detrimental to the interests of society, abolished them throughout India, except where they might be authorized by the Government; but this condemnation rendered any state lottery impossible. Lord Ellenborough was busy with the Ferozepore pageantry when the draft reached him, and, though the enactment was not exactly in accordance with his own opinion, gave his immediate consent to it, and the country was at once relieved from this prolific source of evil. The question of slavery had been referred to the Law Commission appointed by the Charter Act of 1833, who drew up an elaborate report, to which were attached the Minutes of the individual members, all of whom were opposed to its immediate abolition. When the question was brought before the Supreme Council, Mr. Bird stood up for its entire and peremptory prohibition, but was not supported by his colleagues. In the able Minute which he drew up on the subject, he said, "It is proposed to postpone this grand measure to some future period, when it can be carried into effect with greater safety. This is exactly

Digitized by Google

the course which was pursued with regard to suttees; certain detailed rules and regulations were passed with a view to restrict within the narrowest possible bounds the performance of that rite, but which were found on trial to be attended with the exact contrary effect; and we were obliged to do at last what might have been done twenty years sooner with equal facility." Some time after, having been appointed Vice-President in Council, and seeing the tide of official opinion turning against the toleration of the evil, he ventured to introduce the draft of an Act for the total and immediate abolition of it throughout India, to which Lord Ellenborough, then in the north-west, gave his hearty concurrence, and soon after extended it to the province of Sinde upon its annexation.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LORD HARDINGE'S ADMINISTRATION, 1844—1848.

Lord Hardinge Governor-General—His Antecedents, 1844.

ON the recall of Lord Ellenborough, the Ministry proposed his kinsman and friend, Sir Henry Hardinge as his successor, and the Court of Directors heartily concurred in the nomination. Sir Henry had entered the army at an early age, and went through the campaigns in the Peninsula under the Duke of Wellington, in which he received four wounds, had four horses shot under him, and earned nine medals. His brightest wreath was won at the battle of Albuera, the success of which was attributed chiefly to his gallantry and skill, and he was described by a great historical authority "as the young soldier of twenty-five with the eye of a general and the soul of a hero." He was present at the battle of Waterloo and was disabled by a severe wound. On the return of peace he entered Parliament, and,

Digitized by Google

having joined the Tory Ministry, filled, on two occasions, the post of Secretary at War, and was twice, for brief periods, Secretary for Ireland. In the management of these departments he exhibited a clear and sound judgment, great decision of character, and a kind and generous disposition, while he acquired a large store of official experience. These qualifications, but more especially his high reputation as a soldier, recommended him for the Government of India, at a time when the right bank of the Sutlege was bristling with hostile bayonets, and the army of the Punjab was beyond the control of the state. He entered on the duties of his office at the same age as Lord Hastings, in his sixtieth year. At the valedictory dinner at the London Tavern, the Chairman expounded to him the various duties of a Governor-General, among the most important of which he pointed out the maintenance of respect for the authority of the Court; "and we are persuaded," he said, "that you will impress this feeling on our servants abroad, not merely by precept, but by your example." With this lecture over the body of his contumacious and immolated predecessor, he was dismissed to his post. He went out with the most pacific intentions, anxious to establish his fame in connection with the Indian empire, not by means of conquest or the exhibition of military skill, but as the friend of peace, by efforts to promote the social interests and welfare of the people. But, like his two predecessors, he was destined to an early disappointment, and the most memorable events of his administration are the four battles fought in fifty-four days, which were more vigorously contested and more sanguinary than any we had previously fought in India.

Sir H. Hardinge in Calcutta, 1844.

Sir Henry Hardinge reached Calcutta on the 23rd July. Before leaving England he paid a visit to Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone to seek his advice. The veteran statesman warned him against meddling with civil details. On his arrival he took the earliest opportunity of calling up and stating to the Secretaries to Government that he was not accustomed to civil affairs, and least of all to

Digitized by Google

Indian questions, but as they were selected and paid for their experience in such matters, he expected in every case that they would suggest in writing what they considered best to be done, and if he placed his initials under the suggestions they were to be carried into effect. "I do not think," he said, "you will try to mislead me, but if you do, it will be the worse for you sooner or later." Occasionally, he took steps to assure himself that he was properly advised, and was jealous and inquisitive if he suspected anything wrong in the opinions offered to him. He never allowed the Secretaries to forget their responsibility, and they felt that he was not to be trifled with. Under this system, business is said to have been promptly and satisfactorily performed. Within three months after his arrival he passed the memorable resolution, which held out the encouragement of office and promotion in the public service to the successful students of the Government colleges, as well as of private institutions; and thus gave the state the benefit of the talent which it had assisted to develope. For some time, this liberal measure was but slenderly carried into effect; because in India, as in England, the cause of education has been the sport of party prejudices and individual caprices. It was not fully carried out till after the establishment of the University of Calcutta, to which the various educational institutions in the country were affiliated, and which was impartial in the distribution of honours, but the merit of it belongs to Sir Henry Hardinge's administration, and he was recompensed by an address of thanks signed by five hundred of the most influential native gentlemen in Calcutta. The important and difficult question of corporal punishment in the native army was forced upon his attention at an early period, by a large body of experienced officers, who considered the abolition of it by Lord William Bentinck a great error. To that measure there had always been the cardinal objection that the retention of flogging in the European army after it had been abolished in the sepoy regiments created an invidious distinction, which lowered the character of the English soldier in the

Digitized by Google

estimation, not only of his own native comrades, but also of natives of all ranks. It was also asserted, by a reference to the increase of acts of insubordination, that the abolition had failed as an experiment of discipline. Under the old system, the average number of cases of corporal punishment had not exceeded 700 in the year, while under the new rule, the number sentenced for rebellious conduct to work on the roads with thieves and felons—which inflicted indelible disgrace on their families—amounted in the aggregate to 10,000. It was a question beset with difficulties. More than one regiment was known to be in a state of disaffection, and it was affirmed that only a spark was required to kindle the flame of mutiny throughout the army. Sir Henry listened calmly to all that was advanced on both sides of the question, and after a most anxious and careful deliberation, drew up a masterly Minute which embodied the arguments on which he came to the conclusion of repealing Lord William Bentinck's order. Greatly as it is to be desired that the humiliating practice of corporal punishment, which cannot fail to lower the morale of an army, should be extinguished under the flag of England in all parts of the world, still, the re-establishment of it in the then existing condition of the Bengal army, from a paramount consideration of duty, was an act of moral courage which reflects the highest credit on Sir Henry Hardinge. It is grateful to record that the punishment was so rarely inflicted that the order became a dead letter.

Revolutions in the Punjab, 1839-40.

During the years 1844 and 1845 the attention of Sir Henry Hardinge was anxiously fixed on the storm gathering in the Punjab; and we now turn to the progress of events in that country, where the death of Runjeet Sing was followed by six years of anarchy and bloodshed. He was succeeded in July, 1839, by his imbecile son, Khurruk Sing, but all real power was vested in Khurruk's son, the young and gallant Nao Nihal, who, if he had not been prematurely cut off, would probably have emulated the ambition of his grandfather, whose talent and energy he inherited. This

Digitized by Google

power, however, he was obliged to share with Dhyan Sing, the minister, one of the three brothers of the Jummoo, or Dogra family, which at this period played a most important part in Punjab politics. Golab Sing, the head of the house, was originally a running footman, who happened to attract the attention of Runjeet Sing, and rapidly rose in favour; he was promoted to high office, and enriched with the territory of Jummoo, lying between Lahore and Cashmere. The Jummoo rajas were Rajpoots and not Sikhs, and this circumstance, combined with the extraordinary power they had attained, rendered them objects of envy and aversion. It was the great object of Nao Nihal Sing to reduce the authority of this family which overshadowed the throne, but his career was too brief to accomplish it. Khurruk Sing died, prematurely, on the 5th November, 1840, of the excesses in which he had long indulged, and his son, after the performance of his funeral obsequies, was passing under a covered gateway on his return to the palace when a portion of the structure fell and injured him so seriously that he expired in the course of the evening.

Shere Sing and the British Government, 1842.

Chand Kowur, the widow of Khurruk Sing, seized the sovereignty, as regent, on behalf of the offspring to which the widow of Nao Nihal Sing was expecting to give birth, and she was assisted in the management of the state by Shere Sing, the reputed son of Runjeet Sing, and by the minister, Dhyan Sing. Shere Sing, who himself aspired to the sovereign power, and was supported by British influence, as well as by the minister, succeeded in gaining over some divisions of the army, and marched down upon Lahore on the 14th January, 1841. The chiefs interfered and insisted on a compromise. Chand Kowur was induced to retire from the court to a large jageer which was assigned to her, and Shere Sing became the ruler of the Punjab. He was shrewd, bold and frank, but the slave of sensuality, and the vassal of the Jummoo rajas, whom he was unable either to shake off, or to control. The soldiers had been the chief instruments

Digitized by Google

of his elevation, and he rewarded them with an increase of pay to the extent of a rupee a-month, which, as might have been expected, only served to sharpen their avarice and to increase their arrogance. They proceeded to wreak their vengeance on the officers who were obnoxious to them. General Court was obliged to fly for his life; General Avitabile was constrained to abandon Peshawur and seek shelter at Jellalabad, and the governor of Cashmere was put to death. The merchants of Umritsir began to tremble for their warehouses and money bags, and became clamorous for British protection. Shere Sing, unable to restrain his troops, made overtures to Lord Auckland in the spring of 1841, for the assistance of a British force. Sir William Macnaghten at Cabul was at the same time urging him to "crush the Sings, macadamize the Punjab, and annex the province of Peshawur to the dominions of Shah Soojah." A force of 10,000 men was accordingly held in readiness to enter the Punjab, and so little was the real strength of the Khalsa army appreciated that the Resident at Loodiana actually proposed to march with this force to Lahore and disperse it. For this aid Shere Sing was to pay a subsidy of four lacs of rupees and to cede the Cis-Sutlege province to the Company. On receiving the mention of this proposal, he is said to have replied to it by simply drawing his finger across his throat, to signify the fate to which it would consign him. There can be no doubt that if this insane project had been persisted in, the whole Khalsa army would have risen to a man, and hurled back the invasion. With the exception of some Mahommedan corps, that army consisted of a compact body of martial Sikhs, united by strong national and religious sympathies, proud of the victories they had gained and the conquests they had achieved, and fully conscious of their strength. When the iron sceptre of Runjeet Sing was removed, these Prætorian bands became the masters of the Punjab. The soldiers in each regiment were generally obedient to their own officers, but, as a body, their policy was regulated by the will, not of the sovereign or his minister, but of the army committees called *punches*,

Digitized by Google

the council or jury of five, who made every movement subservient to the interests of the army, and not of the state. The adherence of the troops was consequently given to those who were most liberal in subsidizing them.

Movement in Tibet, 1841.

While the capital was a prey to anarchy, Golab Sing, the Jummoo raja was pushing his ambitious projects in the north beyond the Himalaya range. His Lieutenant, Zorawur Sing, marched up to the sources of the Sutlege and the Indus, and established a military position in Chinese Tibet. The Governor-General considered it impolitic to allow Sikh influence to be extended to the confines of China, with the Government of which we had been at war, and were now negotiating a peace, and Shere Sing was required to recall the lieutenant of his feudatory. A day was fixed for restoring the town of Garo to the Grand Lama, and a British officer was deputed to witness the surrender; but before the order could reach Zorawur Sing, he was surrounded by the enemy on the banks of the classic lake of Manosurowur, 15,000 feet above the level of the sea. The Sikh soldiers, unaccustomed to the severity of such a climate, were frozen with the cold; their leader was slain; some of the principal officers were retained as prisoners, and the men were then left to perish of cold and starvation at a distance from their homes, which it was impossible for them ever to regain. In the spring of 1842, the victorious Chinese advanced along the upper Indus and expelled the Sikhs from all the positions they had occupied. Golab Sing poured fresh troops across the Himalaya, but, at the request of the British Government, a convention was at length concluded between the Government of Lahore and that of Lassa which replaced matters on the former basis.

Murder of Shere Sing, 1843.

Dhyan Sing the minister, finding his influence in the durbar on the decline, induced Shere Sing, in the year 1843, to recall Ajeet Sing, the head of one of the most powerful clans in the Punjab, who had been banished from the court. Ajeet Sing, who himself aspired to the office of minister,

Digitized by Google

became the boon companion of the prince, but Dhyan Sing, with profound craft, endeavoured to persuade him that he had been inveigled to Lahore, only to ensure his destruction, and he resolved to put his sovereign to death to preserve his own life. On the 15th September, he invited Shere Sing to inspect some new levies he had raised, and shot him dead on the parade; at the same hour his uncle despatched the raja's youthful son Pertab Sing. The assassins then proceeded to the citadel to proclaim a new king in company with Dhyan Sing, who was insidiously separated from his escort and assassinated by Ajeet Sing. The young son of the murdered minister, Heera Sing, who had been the great favourite of Runjeet Sing, immediately called upon the soldiers to avenge these foul murders, and stimulated them to action by the promise of large rewards. They responded to his call, captured the citadel, and put both Ajeet Sing and his uncle to death. Duleep Sing, then five years of age, the son of Runjeet Sing by the ranee Jhindun, was brought forth from the zenana, and proclaimed Maharaja, while Heera Sing appropriated to himself the perilous post of minister. To strengthen his position he attached the troops to his interest, by immediately adding two rupees and a-half to the monthly pay of each soldier. From this time forward the army may be considered the absolute masters of the state. It was to these convulsions at Lahore that Lord Ellenborough made allusion in his Minute of the 1st November, when he dwelt on the necessity of making our rear secure by reducing the strength of the equally insubordinate army of Gwalior.

Murder of Heera Sing and the Pundit Julla, 1844.

The position of Heera Sing was both difficult and unstable. Two other sons of Runjeet Sing started up and endeavoured to supplant Duleep Sing, but, though they were joined by a portion of the troops, their efforts proved abortive. In March, 1844, Soochet Sing, one of the Jummoo rajas, anxious to supplant his nephew, and secure the office of minister, appeared at Lahore with a large body of followers and made an appeal to the army; but Heera Sing had been lavish in his gifts and promises, and his rival

Digitized by Google

was defeated and slain. The Khalsa army, which had now assumed a position of entire independence, was the great object of anxiety to Heera Sing, and he endeavoured to curtail its power by dispersing the regiments, and by raising levies in the highlands, but his purpose was effectually thwarted by the *punches*, who would not permit a single regiment to leave the capital without their concurrence. The success which had hitherto attended his administration was due, not so much to his own abilities, as to the genius of his tutor, the Pundit Julla, the priest of the Jummoo family, who regulated all his movements, and was considered a man of such transcendent talent, that, if he had been able to control the army, he might have succeeded in establishing a dynasty of Peshwas at Lahore. But before his authority was consolidated, he imprudently endeavoured to reduce the power of Golab Sing, who retaliated on him by exciting revolts in various directions. He likewise sequestered the estates of many of the chiefs and treated them with disdain; but, above all, he incurred the wrath of the vindictive ranee and her brother, by his supercilious deportment. They appealed to the army, and Heera Sing and the pundit were obliged to fly, but, although they endeavoured to retard the pursuers by dropping their costly jewels one by one in their path, they were overtaken and put to death, and their heads carried in triumph to Lahore. The death of Heera Sing involved the immolation of twenty-four women, his wives and slaves, on the funeral pile. The Sikhs, though reformed Hindoos, retained with more than ordinary tenacity a passion for suttees, and the veneration of the cow. Indeed, a woman who had devoted herself to death was considered in the light of a sacred character, and men of the first distinction in the state prostrated themselves before her as before an incarnate deity.

Approach of the crisis in the Punjab, 1845.

On the dissolution of the government of Heera Sing, the management of affairs fell into the hands of Juwahir Sing, the brother of the ranee, Jhindun, and of a handsome brahmin of the name of Lall Sing, her favourite paramour. It was not without reason that

Digitized by Google

Sir Henry Hardinge designated her the Messalina of the north. The soldiers received another augmentation of pay, and became so clamorous for fresh gratuities, and so insubordinate, that it was deemed necessary to find some employment for them, to prevent the overthrow of the Government. They were accordingly instigated to march against Golab Sing, who was odious to the Sikhs, and reputed to be very wealthy. The raja could not but feel that his highland regiments would be no match for the well-disciplined Khalsa troops, and he brought into practice all those arts of cozenage of which he was so complete a master. He flattered the army committees; he made a liberal distribution of money among the men, and succeeded at length in prevailing upon them to let him off with a mulct of thirty-five lacs of rupees, and the cession of a portion of his territory. When, however, the money came to be removed, a dispute arose between his own officers and those of the army which led to a collision; two chiefs were killed, and the passions of the soldiers were inflamed to such a degree that he was constrained to accompany them to Lahore to prevent the plunder of his capital. At Lahore, the troops and the ministers extorted no less than sixty-eight lacs of rupees from him, and left him but a very slender portion of the family domains. He returned to his own principality, after having assisted at the installation of Juwahir Sing as prime minister, and the betrothal of Duleep Sing to the daughter of Chutter Sing. To keep the troops in active employ, the durbar further determined to let them loose on Moolraj, who had been permitted to succeed to the office of dewan, or viceroy of Mooltan, on the assassination of his father in 1844, but had refused to increase his annual remittances, or to pay the fine of a crore of rupees which was demanded of him on his succession to the Government. Moolraj felt, as Golab Sing had done, that it would be impossible for him to cope with the Sikh army now marching against him, and in September, 1845, rescued himself from danger by a compromise of eighteen lacs of rupees. Soon after, Peshora Sing, another of the sons of Runjeet, raised the standard of revolt

Digitized by Google

at Attock, but was defeated and ruthlessly put to death by Juwahir Sing. That unfortunate prince had always enjoyed a degree of popularity with the people and the army from his relationship to Runjeet, and the contempt which had been generally felt for the low debauchee who occupied the post of minister, was turned into resentment by this atrocious murder. Lall Sing, who aspired to the office of vizier, made every effort to inflame this animosity. The *punches* met and determined that Juwahir Sing should die the death of a traitor, and he was led out into the plain of Meean Meer, in the neighbourhood of Lahore, and deliberately executed. After the loss of her brother, the ranee sat daily in durbar, transacting business, and in the beginning of November, 1855, appointed Lall Sing minister, and Tej Sing general-in-chief; but the army which had within the year humbled the two great feudatories of Jummoo and Mooltan, exacted eighty-six lacs of rupees from them, defeated Peshora Sing, and pronounced death on the minister, was now the only real power in the state.

Preparations on the frontier, 1845.

Nothing can more fully demonstrate the feeling of mutual respect and confidence which subsisted between the Government of India and Runjeet Sing than the fact that for thirty years after the Metcalfe treaty, the outpost at Loodiana, within a few marches of Lahore, and a hundred and fifty miles from any support, was left with a garrison of only two or three regiments. The anarchy which supervened on the death of Runjeet constrained the Government of India to make better provision for the protection of the frontier. Lord Auckland established a new cantonment at Ferozepore, which, however, was inadequately garrisoned. Lord Ellenborough, who considered a Sikh war all but unavoidable, increased the force on the frontier to 17,600 men with sixty-six guns. Sir H. Hardinge, immediately on his arrival, investigated the state of affairs on the Sutlege with the eye of a soldier, and found that it was one of extreme peril, and that the force collected there was not sufficient for the purpose of defence, still less for extensive

Digitized by Google

operations, if war should be forced upon us. His attention was steadily given to the augmentation of the army on the frontier, and he accomplished it so gradually and quietly, that it attracted no notice even in our own provinces. By these arrangements the number of troops massed on the Sutlege and at the stations immediately below it, was increased to 40,500, with ninety-four guns. Sir Henry Hardinge likewise brought up from Sinde to Ferozepore fifty-six large boats, which Lord Ellenborough had, with great forethought, ordered to be constructed there to serve as a pontoon. It has been surmised that it was this large assemblage of troops in front of the Punjab, which raised the suspicions of the Khalsa army and led to the invasion of our territories, in order to anticipate our designs. But, considering the distracted condition of the Punjab, a prey to political convulsions, the Government of India would have been without excuse if the most ample preparations had not been made to meet an impending crisis, which might arrive at any day. The Khalsa army was the most efficient and the most formidable which had ever been assembled under native banners. It possessed all the vigour of a young creed, and of a recent organization. It was flushed with its past successes, and panted for future triumphs. Unmindful of its defeat at Jumrood, it considered itself more than a match for the Afghans, and, consequently, superior to the British, whom the Afghans had once defeated and chased from their territory. In 1843, and again in 1844, a large Sikh force had marched down towards the Sutlege with a view to the invasion of the Company's territories. During the year 1845 the army had completely overpowered the state, and the durbar at Lahore felt that the only chance of maintaining its own existence was to commit it to a conflict with the British power. No effort was therefore spared by those in authority to inflame the minds of the soldiers against our Government, and they met at the tomb of Runjeet Sing to renew their vows of fidelity to the Khalsa, and to devote themselves to the promotion of its greatness. It was not the precautionary measures

Digitized by Google

of the British Government, or the proceedings of its agents on the frontier, which brought on the collision. It was the ranee and Lall Sing and Tej Sing who launched the Sikh battalions on our territories, from the selfish motive of providing for their own security, and endeavoured to avert the plunder of Lahore by sending them to sack Delhi and Benares. If any blame is to be attached to Sir Henry Hardinge, it is that, in the presence of such imminent danger, he exceeded in moderation the bounds of prudence, and that, from the laudable desire of avoiding the charge of having provoked hostilities by the extent of his military preparations, he delayed to move the troops which he had collected, to the banks of the Sutlege, to be on the spot for immediate action whenever the emergency should arrive. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that the military virtues of the Sikh army had always been underrated by the political officers connected with the Punjab, and that even to the latest period it was designated by some in high position "a rabble demoralized by the absence of every principle of subordination, and by its unchecked violence." Neither the Government nor its officers had any adequate conception of the profound feeling of national ambition and arrogant confidence, and unexampled courage with which it was animated. They thought it possible that British districts might be insulted by the desultory inroads of marauding horsemen, or by loose bands of fanatic Akalis, but they never dreamt that 60,000 soldiers, with a large and admirably served artillery, would cross the Sutlege and burst as suddenly on our dominions as Hyder Ali had burst on the Carnatic sixty-five years before.

The Sikh army cross the Sutlege, 1845.

On the evening of the 17th November a general order was issued by the durbar for the invasion of the British dominions, but the astrologers declared that there would not be an auspicious day before the 28th. The troops were impatient to advance, and the ranee endeavoured to hasten their departure; but her eagerness tended to rouse their suspicions, and they remained in a state

Digitized by Google

of hesitation for nearly three weeks. On the 23rd November the Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief received intimation of the marching orders the Sikh army had received, and Major Broadfoot, the political agent on the frontier, urged the most prompt and energetic measures of defence, but Sir Henry Hardinge, still clinging to the hope of peace, directed him to send another remonstrance to the Lahore durbar, the only response vouchsafed to which, was an order to the troops to commence their march without any further delay. Animated by a feeling of national and religious enthusiasm, 60,000 Khalsa soldiers with 40,000 armed followers and a hundred and fifty guns of large calibre crossed the Sutlege in the brief space of four days, each soldier turning his hand with great alacrity to the transport of the guns, the driving of the bullocks, or to any other labour which offered itself; and by the 16th the whole force was encamped within a short distance of Ferozepore. That fort was held by Sir John Littler, one of the oldest and best officers in the service, with 10,000 troops and thirty-one guns. Both he and his officers considered this force sufficient to dispute the passage of the river; the reason why this was not attempted, is one of the many enigmas of the two Sikh campaigns which are bequeathed to the researches of the future historian. On the 11th December, preparations had been made for a grand ball in the Commander-in-chief's state tents at Umbala, when information was unexpectedly received that the Sikh army had marched down to the fords of the Sutlege, and was on the eve of crossing it. The ball was abandoned by common consent, and the night was spent in hasty preparations for the march. The next day the Commander-in-chief started with the troops assembled in haste, for the relief of Sir John Littler, who was enveloped by an army six times the strength of his own, accompanied with artillery greatly superior in number and power. Hours were now invaluable. The troops, heavily accoutred, performed a march which had never before been attempted in India, moving a hundred and fifty miles

Digitized by Google

in six days, through heavy sand, with little time to prepare their food, even when they were able to obtain any, and with scarcely an hour for repose.

Confiscation of the Cis-Sutlege districts, 1845.

On the 13th, the Governor-General published a Declaration of War, and confiscated all the districts belonging to the Sikh crown south of the Sutlege. Major Broadfoot had with incredible labour provisioned the stations on the line of march, and collected large stores at Bussean, which was within easy distance of the ford at which the Sikhs had crossed, and open to their attacks. Sir Henry, who had preceded the Commander-in-chief, on reaching that depôt, perceived the necessity of protecting it from the assault of the Sikhs, and lost no time in ordering a force of 5,000 men from Loodiana to render it secure. The importance of this movement cannot be overrated, as the capture of Bussean by the enemy, with all its stock of provisions, would have delayed the operations of the army for more than ten days, and indefinitely augmented the difficulties of Sir John Littler's position. His duties were rendered the more arduous from the charge of the women and children at Ferozepore. It might have been expected that after the warning received at Cabul, where the operations of the force were fatally hampered by the presence of ladies, so egregious a blunder would not have been repeated, and that those who were residing at Ferozepore would have been placed beyond the reach of danger, as soon as it was known that the Sikh army had received orders to cross the river; but they were permitted to continue there as if no enemy were at hand, and it was not till the place was actually invested that they were sent even into the fort. On the arrival of the Sikh force before Ferozepore, Sir John Littler marched out and offered the enemy battle, but they declined it. The day after, a large portion of the Khalsa army pushed forward ten miles to Ferozeshuhur, and constructed entrenchments of the most formidable character, leaving Tej Sing behind to watch the movements of General Littler. It is still a mystery why the

Digitized by Google

Sikh army, 60,000 strong, did not make a vigorous effort to dispose of his force before he could receive any assistance. It has been said that they had no skill in sieges, and shrunk from an assault on his fortifications. It has, again, been affirmed that if the Sikh generals had been as sincerely bent on exterminating British power as their soldiers were, nothing could have saved General Littler. But Tej Sing and Lall Sing stood as much in awe of their own troops as of their enemies, and dreaded the chance of their triumph more perhaps than their defeat. To what extent the assertion which has been made that both these generals had touched English gold is to be believed, depends on documents not before the public.

Moodkee, 1845. Lall Sing's scouts had brought him information that the Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief were advancing to the attack of the Sikh army with only a slender force, and he pushed forward to the village of Moodkee with about 20,000 men and twenty-two guns, where under cover of the jungle he awaited the arrival of the British commander. On the 18th December the army had made a fatiguing march of twenty-one miles, over an arid plain, and at the sight of a pool of water on its arrival at the encamping ground, men, horses, and camels, rushed down impetuously, to appease a thirst which appeared to be unquenchable. The troops had not broken their fast since the preceding night, and were just preparing to cook a meal when a cloud of dust rose up before them. Major Broadfoot, who galloped off to reconnoitre, returned in haste to announce that it was raised by the Sikh army, and the thunder of its cannon soon corroborated his report. In this, as in numerous other instances, the intelligence department of the army was deplorably inefficient, and Sir Hugh Gough was as completely taken by surprise as he had been at Maharajpore. It was nearly four in the afternoon and little more than an hour of daylight remained. The enemy's horse endeavoured to outflank our force, but were gallantly repulsed. Then came the first conflict between the native sepoy and the Khalsa battalions of Runjeet Sing, trained and

Digitized by Google

disciplined by Allard and Ventura, and the superiority of the Sikhs became at once apparent. One native regiment turned suddenly round and sought the rear, and it was with no ordinary difficulty that the Commander-in-chief and his staff succeeded in bringing it back to the struggle. Even a European corps was for a few moments staggered by the rapidity and precision of the Sikh practice, and in the confusion of the hour one of our regiments fired into another. Lall Sing was the first to fly from the field with his cavalry, and he was at length followed by the infantry, who withdrew under cover of the night, leaving seventeen guns in the hands of the victors, the loss on whose part amounted to 872 in killed and wounded. For sixty years it had been usual to unite the office of Commander-in-chief with that of the Governor-General when he happened, as in the case of Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, and Lord William Bentinck to be of the military profession. This precedent was for the first time neglected on the occasion of Sir Henry Hardinge's appointment, and he was understood to have brought out with him only a dormant commission of Commander-in-chief, to be acted upon if the occasion should arise. After the battle of Moodkee, he placed his services at the disposal of the Commander-in-chief, and magnanimously took the post of second in command, an act well calculated to restore the confidence of our army which had been rudely shaken by the skill and valour displayed by the Sikhs, and the manifest deficiency of our tactics.

Battle of Ferozeshuhur, Dec. 21, 1845.

The army halted for two days at Moodkee to take repose and bury the dead, and was reinforced with two European and two native regiments, brought up by forced marches through the untiring energy of the Governor-General. He resolved that the army should advance to the attack of the entrenched camp of the Sikhs without the encumbrance of baggage, and it was left, together with the sick and wounded and the camp equipage, in the fort of Moodkee, guarded by a regiment and a-half. The force started

Digitized by Google

on the morning of the 21st for Ferozeshuhur, without provisions or tents. General Littler, who was duly advised of this movement by Sir Henry, was directed to join the army at the period of its arrival. He accordingly moved out early in the morning, leaving his camp pitched, his bazaar flags flying, his cavalry pickets standing, and a sufficient force to guard the fort, the entrenchment, and his female charge. He eluded the observation of Tej Sing, and reached the main force with 5,500 men and twenty-two guns a little before noon. The Sikh entrenchment was in the form of a parrallelogram, around the village of Ferozeshuhur, about a mile in length and half a mile in breadth; the shorter sides looking towards the Sutlege and Moodkee; the longer towards Ferozepore and the plain on the east. The number of Sikh troops in the camp under the command of Lall Sing was estimated at 35,000, with 100 guns and 250 camel swivels. The batteries were mounted, not with ordinary field artillery, but with siege guns of heavy calibre, placed in position. The day was the shortest in the year, and with such a foe as the Sikhs had proved themselves to be, every moment was of inestimable value; but, after the junction of Sir John Littler, more than three hours and a-half were frittered away, and it was four in the afternoon before the first shot was fired. This delay, which entailed the most disastrous results, has never been accounted for, except by a reference to the general muddle which was visible in almost all the Sikh engagements. Sir Charles Napier, in his comments on the strategy of the day, maintained that the attack should have been made on the two sides which were not protected by the tremendous guns immoveably planted in their position, but Sir Hugh Gough resolved to follow his usual practice of charging at once right up to the muzzle of the guns, and carrying the batteries by cold steel. He himself held the command on the right; Sir Henry Hardinge in the centre, and Sir John Littler on the left. It fell to the lot of Sir John to attack the strongest section of the enemy's positions, the western face, where they had gathered the iron strength of their heaviest

Digitized by Google

guns. He had brought twenty-two guns out of Ferozepore, but he derived no aid, or next to none, from them, and his troops advanced with the utmost gallantry up to the batteries, where they were arrested by an overwhelming fire. The 62nd foot, mowed down by grape and round shot, was checked and retired—beaten, but not in the eye of candour, disgraced,—leaving seventy-six of its brave men and seven of its gallant officers within fifty paces of the entrenchments. The other divisions encountered an equally terrific and unexpected resistance. To borrow the language of the historian of the Sikhs: "Guns were dismounted and the ammunition was blown into the air; squadrons were checked in mid career; battalion after battalion was hurled back with shattered ranks, and it was not until after sunset that portions of the enemy's position were finally carried. Darkness, and the obstinacy of the contest, threw the English into confusion; men of all regiments and arms were mixed together; generals were doubtful of the fact or of the extent of their own success, and colonels knew not what had become of the regiments they commanded, or of the army of which they formed part." General Littler's repulsed division fell back to a village two miles to the west. Sir Harry Smith's division penetrated to the heart of the camp and occupied the village of Ferozeshuhur, but the enemy brought so heavy a fire to bear on his battalions, that they were obliged at two in the morning to withdraw to a village two miles distant. The feat performed by the 3rd dragoons was both the most daring and the most useless of the engagement. Without any orders from the Commander-in-chief, they charged across the ditch while the battery in front mowed them down, till the yawning trench was choked up with their numbers, and those who followed crossed on a bridge of their own dead and dying comrades. This gallant band, after having silenced the battery in its front, faced the Khalsa army within the entrenchments, swept through the camp with loud huzzas over tents, ropes, pegs, guns, fires and magazines, and never paused till it emerged on the opposite side and

Digitized by Google

rejoined their companions. General Gilbert's division, which was the strongest, after having captured the guns in position, was met by a storm of musketry, and obliged to retire as darkness set in, and bivouac on the edge of the Sikh encampment. With this division were the Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief. During the night, which has justly been styled the "night of horrors," the enemy's expense magazines were ever and anon exploding; their camp was on fire in several places, but they did not cease to keep up a continuous discharge upon our soldiers. The Governor-General passed the night in moving from regiment to regiment, endeavouring to sustain the spirits and revive the ardour of the men; but, within three hundred yards of his position the great Sikh gun was dealing destruction on the recumbent and exhausted ranks, and it became indispensable to silence it. Soon after midnight he called up the 80th foot and the 1st Europeans lying around him on the frozen ground, and placing himself at their head, charged the gun and spiked it. It was with great truth that Sir Henry Hardinge remarked that another such engagement would shake the empire to its foundation.

Second engagement, December 22nd, 1845.

It was suggested that the army should retire to Ferozepore, but Sir Henry strenuously opposed the movement. He felt that our political safety required the utter overthrow of the Sikh army, and he determined to renew the engagement the next morning, although there was but one weak division left for the work which had baffled the whole army the previous day. But in the Sikh encampment, though unknown to the English commanders, there had been stormy counsels and bitter recrimination, mutiny and desertion, and Lall Sing's military chest had been plundered by his own troops. As day dawned, the Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief collected the scattered soldiers of General Gilbert's division, and advanced to assault the entrenchments. The opposition was feeble; the batteries were attacked in reverse and captured, and our troops swept down the whole length and rear of the enemy's position with

Digitized by Google

little opposition. The legions which had defended this Roman encampment with Roman courage, were in full flight to the Sutlege through the cowardice, or the treachery, of Lall Sing. The British line, as soon as it had cleared the works, halted on the northern face, and the two commanders were received with grateful acclamations as they rode along the ranks. The cheers had scarcely subsided when a cloud of dust announced the approach of a new enemy. This was Tej Sing, who, on finding that Sir John Littler had eluded his vigilance, marched down towards Ferozeshuhur, on the morning of the 22nd, with 20,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 70 guns. He found that the entrenched camp at Ferozeshuhur had been lost, that its powerful batteries, with all the munitions of war and the standards, were in the hands of the British, and that the Sikh army was in full retreat to the river. But he did not know that the British troops were drooping from hunger, having tasted no food for thirty-six hours, that their ammunition was completely exhausted, and that if vigorously attacked by his fresh battalions and his splendid artillery, no exhibition of the most brilliant courage could have saved them from destruction. After a brief cannonade, which at once dismounted our artillery, he withdrew with his whole force to the Sutlege; and the British empire in India was again saved by a miracle.

Remarks on Ferozeshuhur, 1845.

The battle of Ferozeshuhur was the most severe and critical we had ever fought in India. Never before had we encountered so resolute or skilful an enemy, and if our ranks had been composed only of sepoys, the empire might have passed away. The casualties on our side amounted to 2,415, including a hundred and three officers, and, although an effort was made to extenuate this loss by a reference to engagements in Europe even more sanguinary, it was impossible to evade the conclusion, that with more skilful strategy, no small portion of it might have been avoided. It was the defect of our tactics, and the deficiency of our ammunition, quite as much as the military ardour and courage of the Sikhs, which for a time gave a character of equality to the

Digitized by Google

struggle. As second in command the Governor-General could not, without going to extremities, issue or enforce orders, he could only suggest his wishes. He had five aides-de-camp killed and five wounded, and the only officer on his staff who escaped was his youngest son, Arthur, who fought by his side throughout the action. In this melancholy engagement fell the noble Broadfoot, and the chivalrous Somerset, who had been severely wounded at Maharajpore, and, after fighting at Ferozeshuhur with the hereditary gallantry of his race, fell covered with wounds. There, too, perished the amiable Major D'Arcy Todd, the former minister at Herat, who went into action with a mournful presentiment that he should not survive it, and Colonel Taylor, who had fought in America and Burmah, had assisted in forcing the Khyber, and won fresh laurels at Istaliff. Prince Waldemar of Prussia, who had been making the tour of the Himalayas, joined the Governor-General's camp with his medical attendant, Dr. Hoffmeister, who was killed, and Counts Greuber and Oriolo; and the grandson of Frederick the Second, at the distance of half the globe from his native land, took an active share in a battle as fiercely contested as that of Rosbach. The extraordinary carnage of the day has led to the enquiry, why the action was not deferred till the morrow, but it has been recorded by officers of the soundest judgment, that, considering the plan of the campaign, it could not have been safely postponed on military grounds. It was of the first importance to bring on an engagement before the junction of the two Sikh forces. The condition of the British army, moreover, would not have been improved by a bivouac during a night of bitter cold, without food, water, or shelter, Besides, it is by no means certain that, even if the battle had been delayed till the morrow, the same strategy would not have been adopted of throwing the battalions on entrenchments bristling with cannon, and served by the best native artillerymen in India, and the increase of the enemy's force would, in that case, only have served to increase the slaughter.

Digitized by Google

Necessity of reinforcements, 1846.

The tide of invasion had thus been stemmed. Of the 60,000 Khalsa soldiers who had poured down on our territories twelve days before, not one remained in arms on the left bank of the Sutlege; but in the battles of Moodkee and Ferozeshuhur, our army had lost a fifth of its number, and exhaustxd its ammunition. Hence it became necessary to order up a full supply of military stores of every description, and a large armament of siege guns from the nearest depôt, which unfortunately happened to be more than two hundred miles distant, at Delhi. While this heavy convoy was slowly wending its way up to the banks of the Sutlege, the British army was condemned to a period of inactivity, between the fords of Ferozepore and Hurreekee. This delay in following up the success of the army, was naturally attributed by the Sikhs to fear. Towards the end of January Runjoor Sing crossed the river in force, and threatened the station of Loodiana, from which Sir Henry Hardinge had withdrawn the division for the protection of Bussean, and Sir Harry Smith was sent with four regiments of infantry, three of cavalry, and eighteen guns, to cover that station. On the night of the 20th January, he received information that Runjoor Sing had suddenly broken up his camp on the river, and marched down to Buddowal, a village lying between Loodiana and the force advancing to relieve it. Sir Harry made no change in the order of his march, because he mistrusted the intelligence, and also, because he expected the garrison of Loodiana to advance and meet him on the route he had fixed upon. If he had listened to the earnest advice of his experienced officers, he would have avoided the disaster which befel him. Runjoor Sing, though described by the most shrewd observer of the Lahore chiefs as "an ass of that order of mind which experience could not improve," still contrived to envelope and completely to outflank the whole British force by the numerical superiority of his battalions and his artillery; and it was only through the admirable handling of the cavalry by Brigadier Cureton, that the division was saved from a fatal reverse.

Digitized by Google

The greater portion of the baggage, however, fell into the hands of the Sikhs, and some prisoners, and artillery store carts, were conveyed in triumph to Loodiana.

Battle of Aliwall, 28th Jan., 1846.

This disaster gave fresh confidence to the enemy, and it was deemed necessary to clear the left bank of the Sutlege of their troops, and prevent an attack by Runjoor Sing on the long convoy coming up from Delhi. He was reinforced by 4,000 regular troops and twelve guns, and fell back to a position at Aliwall on the Sutlege. General Smith's force was likewise augmented to 11,000 men, and he was urged by the Governor-General to lose no time in attacking the enemy. The village was feebly defended by some battalions of hill men, who took to flight, with Runjoor Sing at their head, after firing a few rounds. But the British troops met with a stern resistance from the Khalsa soldiers posted on their right, men of true Sikh blood and metal, who stood their ground with unflinching courage, and it was not till their ranks had been thrice pierced by Cureton's cavalry that they became disorganized, and retreated to the river, in which no small number of them met a watery grave, leaving sixty-seven guns as trophies in the hands of the victors. The renown which Sir Harry Smith had lost at Buddowal was recovered and heightened by this decisive victory at Aliwall. This reverse disheartened the Sikh ministers and induced them to commence negotiations. The utter incapacity of Lall Sing had become obvious throughout the campaign, and Golab Sing was invited from Jummoo, to take a share in the public councils, and to accept the office of minister. He immediately opened communications with the Governor-General, who informed him that he was prepared to acknowledge a Sikh sovereignty at Lahore, but not till the Khalsa army had been disbanded. Golab Sing replied with great truth that it was beyond his power to control the movements of the troops, who still continued to domineer over the public authorities of the state. It has been asserted that these communications resulted in an understanding that, for a suitable consideration, the Sikh

Digitized by Google

army, when attacked by the English battalions, should be deserted by its own chiefs, and that the way to the capital should thus be left open. The truth of this assertion, which was an article of faith in the camp, has never been distinctly substantiated, but it was strongly corroborated by the conduct of the Sikh generals in the subsequent engagement, and it was strengthened in no small degree by the harsh measure of removing from his political employment the accomplished historian of the Sikhs, who was the first to announce it in print.

Sobraon, 10th Feb. 1846. While the British army was awaiting the arrival of the train from Delhi, and watching the operations of the Sikhs at the ford of Hureekee, they were diligently employed in transporting their force across the Sutlege at that point. With the natural ingenuity of a military people, and, as it was affirmed, with the aid of a Spanish and a French officer, they erected one of the strongest works against which troops had ever been led in India. It consisted of a series of semicircular entrenchments, with the river for their base and the outer line of which, two miles and a-half in circumference from the eastern to the western point, was surrounded with a deep ditch. The ramparts were defended by sixty-seven pieces of heavy ordnance, and 35,000 Khalsa soldiers. A bridge of boats united this encampment with another across the river, where heavy guns had also been planted which completely swept the left bank. These formidable bulwarks were erected in the presence of an inactive British force, burning with impatience to be led against the enemy, who continued from day to day to bid them defiance, by appearing on the plain and exhibiting the evolutions of their splendid horse artillery. At length, after a delay of seven weeks, the long and imposing train of heavy ordnance drawn by stately elephants, together with the munitions of war, marched into the camp on the 8th February, and raised the drooping spirits of the men, European and native. The brigade which had been detached under General Smith to

Digitized by Google

Loodiana rejoined the camp, and made up the British force to 15,000 men, of whom 5,000 were Europeans. The following day was employed in making arrangements for the assault. It was at once perceived that if an entrance could be effected into either end of the entrenchment where it rested on the river, the whole of the guns along the outer line would be taken in reverse and rendered useless. It was affirmed that Lall Sing treacherously informed the Governor-General that the western corner was the weakest of the Sikh entrenchments, and it was in consequence of this disclosure that the main attack was directed to this point by the division under General Dick. The centre division, under General Gilbert, and the right division, under General Sir Harry Smith, were directed to make feint attacks to divert the attention of the enemy from the real assault. Brigadier Cureton with his cavalry was appointed to watch the Sikh horse under Lall Sing. The whole of the heavy ordnance was planted in masses on some of the more commanding points opposite the Sikh entrenchments. A dense fog at dawn of the 10th enabled the Commander-in-chief to make his dispositions unnoticed by the enemy. The fog rolled up like a curtain at seven in the morning, and the great guns opened on the encampment, which was under the command of Tej Sing. The Sikhs, nothing daunted, answered flash for flash from their powerful ordnance, and the rays of the sun scarcely pierced the sulphurous smoke which filled the atmosphere. At nine, before the cannonade had made any impression on the enemy's position, the British ammunition began to run short, and Sir Hugh Gough discovered that it was visionary to expect that his guns could, within any limited time, silence the fire of seventy pieces, behind well-constructed batteries of earth, planks, and fascines, or dislodge troops covered by redoubts, or epaulments, or within a treble line of trenches. After having waited for these guns for seven weeks, it was found that they were of little avail for the success of the day, and it became evident that the issue of the struggle must be

Digitized by Google

left to the arbitrament of musketry and the bayonet. Accordingly Colonel Lane's horse artillery galloped up and delivered their fire within 300 yards of the batteries, and Sir Robert Dick's division moved up to the attack in admirable order, charged home with the bayonet, leaped the ditch, and mounted the rampart. The Sikhs instantly perceived that this was to be the principal point of attack, and, slackening the defence of the entrenchments opposed to the other divisions, concentrated their attention on this contest. More guns in the interior of the Sikh encampment were turned on the assailants, who were also met by a hand to hand fight, and repeatedly staggered. Fresh regiments were sent up by the British commanders to their aid, but they recoiled in confusion from the deadly fire of the Sikhs, and it became necessary to order the two other divisions to make a simultaneous assault on the batteries before them. This was no sooner perceived by the enemy than they returned tumultuously to the posts they had quitted, and from every foot of the entrenchments poured on both divisions a withering fire of grape, round shot, and musketry. The gallant charge made by General Gilbert's division on the centre batteries was one of the most memorable feats in the campaign. His men, of whom 689 were killed and wounded in the course of half an hour, were more than once driven back, but their indomitable courage at length mastered the enemy's ramparts. Scarcely less sanguinary were the charges repeatedly made by General Smith's division. The Sikh entrenchment was at length pierced in three directions, and the soldiers, when they could no longer fire, drew their swords and were bayoneted by the side of the guns they had so nobly served. Tej Sing, instead of endeavouring to rally his troops, was among the first to fly, and, either by accident or by design, broke the bridge; but the veteran chief Sham Sing had resolved not to survive a defeat, and, clothing himself in the garments of martyrdom, called on all around him to fight manfully for the Gooroo, rallied his shattered ranks, and rushed on the British bayonets,

Digitized by Google

where he found the death he sought, over a heap of his slain countrymen. The Sikh troops, pressed on three sides into a confused mass, still continued to contest every inch of ground till they were forced to the bridge, which they found broken, and, preferring death to surrender, plunged into the stream. Unfortunately for them it had risen during the night, and flooded the ford, and they perished by hundreds in the attempt to cross. By the forethought of the Governor-General the horse artillery had been brought up during the action and planted along the river, and its cannonade completed the destruction of the enemy. The confusion, dismay, and carnage were such as had not been seen in India since the field of Paniput. The loss on the side of the Sikhs was estimated at 8,000, and the whole of their encampment, with all their artillery, their standards, and vast munitions of war fell to the victors. The loss on our side was 2,383, but the victory was complete. By eleven in the morning not an unwounded Sikh was left on the British bank of the Sutlege. The conquerors, as they beheld the trenches filled with the bodies of their iron-hearted defenders, and the fords of the Sutlege choked up with thousands of corpses, and the river itself exhibiting in every direction the wreck of a great army, did not fail to pay a tribute of admiration to the gallantry and the devotedness of the noble Khalsa army.

The Army enters the Punjab, Feb. 1846.

Major Abbott, a distinguished officer of engineers, had been employed night and day in constructing a bridge with the boats which Lord Ellenborough had built in Sinde, and Sir Henry Hardinge had brought up to Ferozepore, and it was completed the night before the battle. Sir Henry Hardinge, though suffering from a serious injury occasioned by a fall from his horse, had been actively engaged on the field. He quitted it immediately after the victory was complete, and rode twenty-six miles to Ferozepore, to hasten the passage of the troops, and that same night six regiments bivouacked in the Punjab. Three days after the action, the whole army, which, including camp

Digitized by Google

followers, counted 100,000 men and 68,000 animals and forty pieces of artillery, was enabled, through the admirable arrangements of Major Abbott, to cross the river without a single casualty. Two days before the engagement several vakeels arrived from Lahore, and solicited an audience of the Governor-General, but were informed that they would not be received till it had been fought. They made their appearance again on the 11th, bringing with them as a peace offering the European prisoners and a gig captured at Buddowal. They were dismissed with a friendly message to the durbar, which brought raja Golab Sing and two of the ministers to the encampment on the 15th, empowered on the part of the Maharaja Duleep Sing to agree to any terms the Governor-General might think fit to dictate. They were received as the representatives of an offending Government, without the usual forms and ceremonies, and their complimentary offerings were refused. On the 17th, Duleep Sing himself came into the camp, and having made his submission, was dismissed with honour. During these negotiations, the army continued to advance to the capital, and on the 20th was encamped on the plain of Meean Meer. The conquerors were now in possession of the metropolis of those who had wantonly invaded their territories, but Sir Henry Hardinge was determined to repress every outrage, and issued an order strictly forbidding any soldier to enter the city, even from motives of curiosity. The only humiliation to which the Sikhs were subjected was the occupation of the citadel of their pride by a garrison of British troops.

Settlement of the Punjab, 1846.

The future destiny of the Punjab then came up for consideration. The issue of the war had placed it unequivocally at the disposal of the British Government, and Sir Henry Hardinge might have incorporated it with the Company's dominions upon every principle of justice and equity, and with the full concurrence of all the princes of India. But he had neither the means nor the desire of annexation. Sir Charles Napier was, indeed, at the time prepared to march up from Sinde with 16,000 men and fifty guns, but

Digitized by Google

Sir Hugh Gough's army was essentially weak. Our strength in India consists in the number and efficiency of the European troops we are able to bring into the field, and the four battles had reduced this European force to barely 3,000 men. The morale of the army was low; the season of heat and prostration was approaching, and it was not easy to see how the army with its endless followers could have been sheltered and fed during the period when the climate reduced it to a state of inaction. After the battle of Sobraon, the Sikh army still mustered 14,000 strong, with forty pieces of cannon. Upon a careful consideration of all circumstances, Sir Henry Hardinge resolved, and not unwisely, to avoid encumbering his administration with the government of the Punjab. He considered it necessary to punish the Sikh nation for past offences and to prevent the recurrence of aggression, but he was anxious to perform these duties without suppressing its political existence. Immediately after the Sikh army invaded our territory he had issued a proclamation confiscating the Cis-Sutlege possessions of the Lahore crown, and he now annexed the Jullunder dooab, or district lying between the Sutlege and the Beeas, to the Company's dominions, by which he obtained security for our hill stations, and a position which gave us the control of the Sikh capital. The expenses of the campaign were computed at a crore and a-half of rupees, which the Lahore state was required to make good, but the profligacy of the ministers and the rapacity of the soldiery had exhausted the treasury, and of the twelve crores which Runjeet Sing left in it, there remained scarcely fifty lacs of rupees to meet the demand. Sir Henry determined, therefore, to take over the province of Cashmere and the highlands of Jummoo in lieu of the remaining crore. Since the death of Runjeet Sing, the powerful raja of Jummoo, Golab Sing, had always cherished the hope of being able, by some happy turn of circumstances, to convert his principality into an independent sovereignty. During the recent contest he had played the part of an interested neutral, watching the issue of the con-

Digitized by Google

test and prepared to side with the strongest. When called to assume the office of minister at Lahore he negotiated with the Governor-General as much for his own interests, as for those of the state. There could be little doubt that a clear understanding regarding his possessions existed between him and the British Government, and hence it created no surprise when he stepped forward and offered to pay down the crore of rupees on condition of being constituted the independent raja of Cashmere and Jummoo. The sovereignty of those provinces was accordingly sold to him, but it must not be forgotten that he received only an indefeasible title to that which he actually possessed at the time. By this stroke of policy, Sir Henry Hardinge obtained funds to cover the expenses of the war, and planted on the northern division of the Punjab an independent Rajpoot chief between whom and the Sikhs there was a feeling of irreconcilable discord. Tej Sing on hearing of the disposal of Cashmere, offered twenty-five lacs of rupees for another province and princely crown, but was sharply rebuked for his presumption.

Treaty of the 9th March, 1846.

The treaty of the 9th March, in which the settlement of the Punjab was embodied, also provided that the troops of the Lahore state should be paid up and disbanded, and that the regular Sikh army should be completely reorganized, and limited in future to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry and that all the guns, thirty-six in number, which had been pointed against the British force should be surrendered. The troops who had so nobly confronted us in four actions were drawn up and discharged, and their manly deportment gave additional lustre to their valour. They alluded to their discomfiture as the chance of war, and dwelt with unabated confidence on the future destiny of the Khalsa. Within forty-eight hours of the signature of the treaty, the durbar importuned the Governor-General to lend a British force for the security of the Maharaja and his capital until the reconstruction of the Government was complete, and he consented, at length, to leave a sufficient force until the close of the year, but

Digitized by Google

with the positive assurance that it would not be permitted to remain longer. The first Sikh war thus terminated in the dissolution of the Khalsa army and the dismemberment of the Punjab; but India doubted our success. After the independence of every other kingdom had been successively extinguished, the natives still fixed their eyes with a feeling of hope on the new and powerful state which Runjeet Sing had built up in the Punjab, and cherished the belief that a native monarchy had at length been erected on the banks of the Sutlege, the cradle of Hindoo power, destined to re-establish Hindoo supremacy throughout India. The indecisive character of the actions at Moodkee and Ferozeshuhur, combined with the subsequent inactivity of the army, served to strengthen this opinion, and the report of our decisive success at Aliwall and Sobraon was received with feelings of mistrust. Sir Henry Hardinge deemed it important to remove this impression from the native mind, and to demonstrate that the power of Runjeet Sing's kingdom was completely broken, and the last hope of a Hindoo sovereignty dissipated.

Procession of the captured guns, 1846.

A grand procession was accordingly formed of two hundred and fifty of the cannon captured from the Sikhs, which marched from Lahore to Calcutta with every demonstration of military pomp. It was received at every station and cantonment on the route with great distinction by all the public functionaries. Its arrival in Calcutta was celebrated by a magnificent ceremonial in which the Deputy-Governor, Sir Herbert Maddock, and the whole staff of Government, and all the battalions within reach, took a part, and the report of it was transmitted to every durbar in Hindostan and the Deccan. The announcement of four battles fought in fifty-four days to repel an unprovoked assault on our territories, produced an extraordinary sensation in England. Even those who invariably professed a virtuous indignation on every recurrence of war or conquest in India, and attributed it to the ambition and rapacity of our countrymen, were constrained to admit that on this occasion, the question of peace or war

Digitized by Google

did not depend on the will of Government. The thanks of Parliament were moved to Sir Henry Hardinge, to Sir Hugh Gough, and to their brave companions, by Sir Robert Peel in the Commons, and by the Duke of Wellington in the Lords, in speeches which enhanced the value of the honour. The Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief were elevated to the peerage, and a baronetcy was conferred on the victor of Aliwall. To all the troops engaged in the campaign, Sir Henry Hardinge granted twelve months full batta, without waiting for permission from home.

New arrangements in the Punjab, Dec., 1846.

Major Lawrence was selected by Lord Hardinge as the British representative at Lahore, and raja Lall Sing, the paramour of the ranee, the Orloff of the Punjab, was appointed prime minister. He was a man of low extraction, and handsome appearance, but without talent either for civil or military affairs, and his administration, which was very venal and oppressive, made him obnoxious to the people, and more especially to the chiefs. Towards the British Government he acted with singular treachery. Soon after the raja Golab Sing had taken possession of his new kingdom of Cashmere, a formidable opposition was organized against his authority by Imam-ood-deen. Major Lawrence felt the importance of extinguishing the first spark of resistance with the utmost promptitude, before it burst into a flame, and he proceeded in haste towards Cashmere with a large force, notwithstanding the risk of being blocked up by the snows of the approaching winter. "It was an extraordinary spectacle," as remarked at the time, "to witness half a dozen European foreigners taking up a lately subdued mutinous soldiery, through one of the most difficult countries in the world, to put the chief, formerly their commander, now in their minds a rebel, in possession of the brightest gem of their land." The energy and promptitude of this movement ensured its success. The refractory Imam-ood-deen made his submission, and then produced the written orders of Lall Sing for his contumacious proceedings. Lord Hardinge immediately directed a commis-

Digitized by Google

sion of European officers to investigate the conduct of the minister, in the presence of sixty-five Sikh chiefs. The charge of treachery was fully substantiated; he was deposed from his office, and in spite of the remonstrances and tears of the ranee, conveyed to the British territories, and consigned to oblivion on a pension of 2,000 rupees a-month. As the period which Lord Hardinge had fixed for the retirement of the British garrison from the Punjab approached, the durbar and the most influential chiefs assured him that without this support, it would be impossible to carry on the government, or prevent the restoration of Khalsa supremacy. Lord Hardinge yielded with great reluctance to their importunity. Fifty-two chiefs assembled at the durbar tent of the Resident and discussed the articlès of agreement which they themselves had assisted in drawing up, in conjunction with Mr. Currie, and on the 16th December, 1846, affixed their signatures and seals to the new treaty. It provided that a council of regency, composed of eight of the leading chiefs should be appointed to act under the control and guidance of the British Resident, who was to exercise unlimited influence in all matters of internal administration and external policy. A British force was to be stationed in the various forts and stations throughout the country, for the maintenance of which the sum of twenty-two lacs of rupees a-year was to be appropriated from the revenues of the state. The arrangement was to continue for eight years, till the Maharaja Duleep Sing attained his majority. By this treaty a much larger share of authority was conferred on the Resident than had been assumed in any of the states to which the British Government had extended its protection, and Major Lawrence, an officer of the Company's artillery, became, in effect, the successor of Runjeet Sing.

Reduction of the Army, 1846. In the course of thirty-six months, the three independent armies of Sinde, Gwalior and Lahore, numbering 120,000 soldiers, had been extinguished, and all their artillery, which formed their chief strength, captured. The time appeared now to have arrived when the strength of

Digitized by Google

our own army could be regulated without any reference to the hostility of the native powers. For eight years we had been incessantly engaged in war, or in preparations for it, and the armies cf the three Presidencies had been augmented since October, 1838, to the extent of 120,000 men. The pressure on the finances of the empire had been proportionately severe, and the expenditure at this time exceeded the income by a crore and a-half of rupees a-year. Lord Hardinge had been obliged to open a new loan in October, 1846, but, after the satisfactory settlement of the Punjab in December, he considered himself justified in reducing the military force and, with it, the public expenditure. Happily, his long military experience, both in the field and as Secretary at War in the cabinet, enabled him to carry out the principle of reduction with great boldness, and at the same time with the least possible detriment to the efficiency of the public service. The police battalions were, accordingly, disbanded, and the rank and file of the army reduced to the extent of 50,000 men, leaving the number of officers, European and native, undiminished. In the recent actions on the Sutlege it was found that we had not more than 4,500 sabres opposed to more than 20,000 of the enemy, and Lord Hardinge rectified this deficiency by augmenting the irregular branch of the cavalry. These reductions resulted in a saving of a crore and a hundred and fifty lacs of rupees a-year. The revenue of the Sikh provinces on both sides the Sutlege which he had annexed was calculated at some forty lacs of rupees a-year, and, combined with the subsidy of twenty-two lacs from the Lahore state, restored the equilibrium of the finances. Nor should it be forgotten that in all Lord Hardinge's efforts to bring the expenditure within the income, there was no curtailment of individual salaries. Notwithstanding these reductions, the security of the north-west frontier was fully provided for by the allotment of 54,000 men and 120 guns to Meerut and the stations above it. The precautionary measures adopted by Lord Hardinge for the safety of the Punjab, manifested equal foresight and vigour.

Digitized by Google

He did not expect that a country teeming with disbanded soldiers, the bravest and most haughty in India, who had been nurtured in victory and conquest, and pampered with seven years of military licence, would be as free from disturbance, as a district in Bengal. To provide for the prompt suppression of any insurrectionary movements which might arise, he organized three moveable brigades, complete in carriage and equipment, each of which consisted of one European corps, three regiments of native infantry and one of cavalry, with twelve guns, chiefly of European horse artillery. They were held in readiness at Lahore, Jullunder and Ferozepore, to take the field at the shortest notice.

Canals, 1819-1847.

The magnificent canals constructed by the Mogul emperors in the north-west provinces were among the most important of their undertakings, but they became practically extinct with the decay of the empire, and by the middle of the last century had ceased to be of any utility. The efforts made by the British Government to restore these invaluable works originated with Lord Hastings, and the zeal and earnestness with which they were carried on, formed one of the most distinctive features of his administration. Before he resigned his office he had the satisfaction of learning that, through the scientific exertions of Lieutenant Blane, to whom he had entrusted the undertaking, one of the most important of the canals had re-entered the city of Delhi, after an intermission of more than half a century. These labours were continued without relaxation under his successors, and a sum exceeding half a crore of rupees was devoted to the restoration and maintenance of the ancient canals. Such works have always been found remunerative in India, and the whole of this amount, with a trifling exception, was returned to the treasury in the augmented revenue derived from the irrigation of 300,000 acres, the annual produce of which was estimated at two crores and a-half of rupees. The superintendence of the canals at length devolved on Colonel Colvin, one of the most distinguished officers of one of the most renowned corps of the Company's service, the Bengal engineers.

Digitized by Google

Down to this period the labours of the British Government has been directed to the restoration of the decayed canals of the preceding dynasty; but it was now determined to undertake the construction of an original work, far exceeding in magnitude and utility any enterprize of the kind which had ever been contemplated in India. This was the Ganges canal, designed to fertilize the fields of the Dooab lying between that stream and the Jumna. Lord Auckland was traversing this province in 1837, on his way to Simlah, when it was desolated by the great famine, which was estimated to have swept away a million of the inhabitants, and to have cost the state half a million sterling. The smiling aspect, during this calamity, of the districts which had enjoyed the benefit of irrigation from the restored Mogul canals gave great weight to the proposal of Captain Cautley, who had succeeded Colonel Colvin, to construct a canal, and at an interview with Lord Auckland in the following year he was authorized to undertake a thorough examination of the low tract of country lying near the Ganges. The duty was entrusted entirely to his agency. He commenced his labours in December, 1839, and completed the whole of the survey, with the designs of the project, the plans, the estimates, and calculations, with no other aid than that of a young infantry officer, who joined him at the close of the final survey in 1844. His first report was submitted in May 1840, and transmitted to the Court of Directors, who, in a spirit of liberality worthy the greatness of their trust, adopted the plan, extended it beyond the limits which the Indian authorities had ventured to propose, and on the recommendation of Lord Auckland presented Captain Cautley with the sum of 6000 rupees, "in consideration of the great importance of the work which he had projected, and the zeal and ability displayed by him in his plans and report." With this encouragement from home, Lord Auckland prosecuted the work with the utmost vigour, but Lord Ellenborough on his arrival suspended all operations, and one uncovenanted assistant was alone left on the works. The original design was at the same time materially modified, and it was proposed to make

Digitized by Google

the canal primarily a channel of navigation—though there was a river on each side of it—and only, in the second instance, a work of irrigation. A report was called for on the subject; this preposterous plan was rejected, and the canal was restored to its original object. The consideration of this question fell to the lot of Lord Hardinge, and in March, 1847, he visited the head of the canal, and examined its most important feature, the Solani aqueduct, after which he directed that the work should be pushed forward with the utmost activity, and that funds should be supplied without reserve.

Close of Lord Hardinge's Administration, 1848.

The attention of Lord Hardinge during his tenure of office was chiefly occupied in the reduction of the great Khalsa armament, in the construction of a new system of government in the Punjab, in the reorganization of our own army, and the restoration of the finances. These important duties were sufficient to absorb the time of an administration which was limited to forty-two months; but, like Lord Hastings, Lord Hardinge was accustomed to be at his desk an hour or two before dawn, and he was enabled to create leisure for other labours connected with the material and social improvement of the country. He gave a great impulse at an important crisis to the project of Indian railways, then in the struggles of infancy. In October, 1846, he prohibited Sunday labour on all the Government establishments, and gave our Hindoo and Mahomedan subjects a proof of our respect for the principles of our creed. Lord William Bentinck had abolished suttees throughout the British dominions, but they were still perpetrated in the native states, and on the death of the raja of Mundee, a petty independent chief in the neighbourhood of the Governor-General's residence at Simla, no fewer than twelve women were burnt alive on his funeral pile. Lord Hardinge employed the influence of our paramount authority, to induce the independent native princes to abolish, not only female immolation, but female infanticide, and slavery, within their territories, and, before his departure from India, he had the satisfaction of

Digitized by Google

receiving written assurances from twenty-four of the princes and princesses of India, including the raja Golab Sing, of Cashmere, that they had made the most strenuous and successful efforts to meet his wishes, and would not relax them; and a suttee in any native state is now considered as incredible as a duel in England. The distribution of his patronage was regulated by an exclusive regard to the public interests, and he was as free from the suspicion of nepotism as Lord Ellenborough himself. The selection he made for important offices did no little credit to his discernment. Among the most eminent of the public servants whom he was instrumental in bringing forward, may be mentioned Mr.—afterwards Sir Henry—Elliott, a highly distinguished oriental scholar, and an able secretary, who was cut off before he had reached the maturity of his fame; Colonel Grant, whom he selected for the Adjutant-Generalship, and who has won his way to the Governorship of Malta; and the present Governor-General, whose merits he was the first to discover. Lord Hardinge secured the confidence of society in India, as he had done in England, by his sterling sense, and by the rare combination of a kind and conciliatory disposition with decision of character and vigour of discipline. It was felt on both sides the Cape, that in his hands the empire was safe, and that a spirit of improvement pervaded all his purposes. He left Calcutta on the 15th March, 1848, with the conviction that it would not be necessary to fire another shot in India for seven years. The prospect of continued tranquillity appeared equally certain to all the public writers of the day; yet, so impossible is it to forecast the future in India, that before the end of a twelvemonth, the Punjab had revolted and been reconquered, and had become a British province.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION—SECOND SIKH WAR, 1848–49.

Lord Dalhousie, 1848.

On the 19th January, Lord Dalhousie landed at Chandpal ghaut, in Calcutta, and took the oaths and his seat in Council, fifty years after Lord Wellesley, whose magnificent reign he was destined to rival, landed at the same stairs. He was in his thirty-sixth year, the youngest man who had ever assumed the government of India. He may be considered as the last of the proconsuls whom the Directors of the East India Company had for eighty-four years been accustomed to address as "our Governor-General;" his successor, though for some time under their control, became the viceroy of the Crown. Lord Dalhousie had sat in the House of Commons for several years before he succeeded to the family title. He had been President of the Board of Trade in Sir Robert Peel's last cabinet, at a period when that department was inundated by a flood of railway projects, which taxed its energies beyond all former example; and, it was the extraordinary talent, industry, and aptitude for business which he exhibited under that pressure which recommended him to the highest post in the British empire—except the premiership. He assumed the management of India without any of that knowledge of the policy and the institutions of Government, the position of the native princes, or the character of the people, which Lord Wellesley, Lord Minto, Lord William Bentinck, and Lord Ellenborough had brought out with them, but his natural genius soon caught the spirit, and mastered the details of the Indian administration. The period of his rule, which extended to eight years, was filled with transactions of the most momentous character, which will long continue to affect the happiness

Digitized by Google

of the vast population of India. To present a clear and comprehensive retrospect of his administration, it may be useful to waive the chronological order of events, and to distribute them under the three divisions of, the military operations which were forced upon him, his procedure regarding the native princes, and his various plans for the welfare of the people and the prosperity of the country.

Moolraj, 1844-1848.

Within four months of his arrival, all those sanguine expectations which Lord Hardinge had bequeathed to him of a long reign of peace were rudely dissipated, and the note of war was again sounded across the Sutlege. Major—afterwards Sir Henry—Lawrence, a soldier and a statesman, to whom the task of sustaining British authority in the conquered, but unsubdued, kingdom of the Punjab had been committed, was constrained to visit England for his health, and he was succeeded, temporarily, by his brother, and then by Sir Frederick Currie, a member of the Supreme Council. Those who remembered the catastrophe of Cabul, saw, not without some misgivings, a civilian again placed in a position which required the experience and the influential counsels of a military man. He found no velvet cushion at Lahore. Scarcely had he entered upon his office than a small cloud no bigger than a man's hand appeared on the horizon over Mooltan, which, in the course of six months, overspread the Punjab and brought on a conflict as arduous as that of 1845. Sawun Mull, who had been appointed *dewan*, or governor of Mooltan, by Runjeet Sing, was assassinated in 1844, after twenty years of power, and the administration passed into the hands of his son, Moolraj, whose subordination to the central authority of Lahore, was little more than nominal. But Lall Sing, the minister, knowing that a large treasure had been accumulated by Sawun Mull, at Mooltan, demanded a crore of rupees as a *nuzzur*, or succession fine, from his son, who was enabled eventually to effect a compromise for eighteen lacs. He took advantage, however, of the confusion which reigned in the Punjab, to withhold payment; but, on the establishment of a strong

Digitized by Google

government under British auspices, an army was sent to coerce him, but he contrived to baffle it. He then applied for the interposition of Mr. Lawrence, and, uuder his safe conduct, proceeded to Lahore. After adjusting the fine, he offered to resign the government, on the double ground of family dissensions, and the new fiscal arrangements which were about to be introduced into the province, and which he affirmed would damage his income. On the arrival of Sir Frederick Currie at Lahore, Moolraj renewed his offer of resignation, without any other stipulation than that of saving his honour in the eyes of his people. It is difficult to believe that a native chieftain in the position of Moolraj, enjoying all but independent authority, seriously contemplated the surrender of his power, although he may have made the offer under a feeling of temporary irritation; and it would have been an act of wisdom and prudence not to put his professions to the proof. The durbar, however, chose to take him at his word, and in March directed Khan Sing to proceed to Mooltan, on a salary of 30,000 rupees a-year, and take over the government. Sir Frederick Currie selected Mr. Agnew, a civilian and a good oriental scholar, to accompany him, nominally, as the political agent, but in reality to assume the entire management of the country, and to introduce a new system of finance and revenue. For this proceeding he has been severely criticised, and it has been justly remarked that if he was not prepared at the time to support it by an overwhelming force against all the opposition it was certain to encounter, he should have postponed the mission until the usual season of operations in the cold weather. Mr. Agnew, in company with his assistant Lieutenant Anderson, and Khan Sing, with an escort of 350 Sikh troops and a few guns, reached Mooltan on the 18th April, and encamped at the Edgah, a fortified temple in the vicinity of the town.

Murder of the British officers, 1848.

On the morning of the 19th, Moolraj waited on the British officers, to discuss the terms on which the fort and the government were to be given up. He asked for a regular deed of acquittance on the pro-

Digitized by Google

duction of the papers of the previous year, but Mr. Agnew insisted on all the accounts of the previous six years. Moolraj naturally hesitated to produce documents which might compromise him by disclosing the secrets of his administration; and, though he yielded at length to the demand, he left the encampment with a scowl on his brow which boded no good. He felt that he had been injured and dishonoured before his own people. On the morning of the 20th, Mr. Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson proceeded with him to inspect the various establishments which he was about to resign; but, as they entered the fort, he requested them to dismiss a portion of their guard, to which they injudiciously acceded, although he refused, on some frivolous pretence, to diminish his own retinue. As they were returning from the fort and crossing the drawbridge, Mr. Agnew received a spear thrust under his arm, was thrown off his horse, and wounded in three places with a sword as he lay struggling with his assailant. Lieutenant Anderson was likewise suddenly surrounded and felled to the ground by assassins. Moolraj, who was riding side by side with Mr. Agnew at the time, immediately set spurs to his horse and rode off at full speed to his country residence, while the wounded officers were conveyed by their attendants to the Edgah. On the morning of the 20th, a brisk fire was opened upon it from the guns of the citadel, which was maintained throughout the day, and answered by the guns which had accompanied the party from Lahore. Mr. Agnew then despatched a letter appealing to the compassion of Moolraj, but he stated in reply that, although anxious to come to his assistance, he was restrained by the violence of his soldiery. He did not, however, refuse to allow them to fasten a war bracelet on his arm, and there could be no doubt of his complicity in this atrocious attempt to assassinate the British officers. Mr. Agnew and his companion were in hopes of being able to maintain their position until relief should arrive from Bunnoo or Bhawulpore, but their Sikh escort, which consisted of Goorkha soldiers, proved treacherous, and went

Digitized by Google

over in a body to the enemy, leaving them at the mercy of a crew of howling savages, who entered the mosque and completed the work of death. A misshapen monster of the name of Goojur Sing, rushed upon Mr. Agnew, loaded him with the foulest abuse, and severed his head from his body at the third stroke, while the ruffians hacked Lieutenant Anderson to pieces. Their bodies were dragged out amid brutish yells; their heads were presented to Moolraj, and then tossed among the mob, filled with gunpowder, and blown to atoms. The morning after the assassination, Moolraj transferred his family and his treasure to the fort, and, having placed himself at the head of the insurrectionary movement, issued a proclamation summoning all the inhabitants of the province, of every creed, to rise and wage a religious war with the Feringees.

Movements at Lahore, 1848.

The emergency for which the foresight of Lord Hardinge had made provision by his moveable brigades had now arisen; but there was no longer Sir Henry Lawrence at the head of affairs in the Punjab, or Lord Hardinge at the head of the Government. The Resident at Lahore was an amiable and intelligent civilian, the Governor-General was an able statesman, but young in years and new in authority. He was as yet but partially acquainted with those who held posts of importance in the Government, and was, moreover, without any of that military experience which enabled his predecessor to maintain, without presumption, a powerful control of our military movements. Had Sir Henry Lawrence been at Lahore, he would have moved the brigade upon Mooltan, with the same promptitude which he had exhibited in his march to Cashmere at the beginning of the winter, to crush Imam-ood-deen, and doubtless with the same success. Had Lord Hardinge been at the head of the Government, he would have taken upon himself to despatch the large force he had massed on the north-west frontier and collected at Bukkur, and invested Mooltan before Moolraj could make any adequate preparations for resistance. A march through Sinde and from Lahore in the month of May would doubtless have occasioned

Digitized by Google

many casualties, but our empire in India had been acquired and maintained, not by fair weather campaigns, but by taking the field on every emergency, and at any season. On the first news of the assault at Mooltan, Sir Frederick Currie ordered a large force of horse, foot, and artillery to prepare for a march; but on hearing, a day or two after, that the officers had been murdered and that their escort had deserted to the enemy, he countermanded the movement of the troops, and resolved to await the decision of the Commander-in-chief, on whom he pressed the necessity of prompt and energetic action. Lord Gough, however, considered the season of the year unfavourable for military operations, and determined to postpone them to the cold weather, when he should be prepared to take the field in person. Lord Dalhousie gave his concurrence to this decision. Sir Henry Lawrence aptly described this procrastination as "a resolution to have a grand *shikar*—hunt—in the cold season under his own lead."

Lieutenant Edwardes, 1848.

The Resident and the Commander-in-chief had scarcely ceased to bandy arguments, when Lieutenant—now Sir Herbert—Edwardes, a young officer employed in the revenue settlement of Bunnoo across the Indus, who was at the time known only by the productions of his pen which had recommended him to the notice of his superiors, brought the question of a military movement to an immediate issue. With the energy and military enterprise of Clive, but with greater moral courage, inasmuch as he assumed a heavier responsibility, he determined to take the initiative in crushing the revolt. Without waiting for orders from Lahore, he crossed the Indus with 1,200 infantry, 350 horsemen, and two guns, and took up a position at the town of Leiah; but a letter which he intercepted informed him that his men had agreed to sell his head for 12,000 rupees, and their own services for a similar sum; no dependence could therefore be placed on them. Moolraj was moving down to attack him, and he found it necessary to recross the river. His associate in this enterprise, Colonel Cortland, an officer in the

Digitized by Google

service of the durbar, had under his command a regiment of trustworthy Mahomedans and six guns, and the two officers made the most strenuous exertions to raise troops free from the infection of treachery—"bold villains ready to risk their own throats and to cut those of any one else." Colonel Cortland had been ordered by the Resident to move southward to aid in the collection of revenue, and he quitted Lieutenant Edwardes with 2,000 men. Moolraj immediately despatched a force of 6,000 men to attack him, when Lieutenant Edwardes moved down to his assistance, by land and by water, executing a march of fifty miles in twenty-four hours. The combined force was successful in repelling the assault, in occupying the whole of the Trans-Indus district, and in obtaining possession of all the boats on the river. Meanwhile, the Nabob of Bhawulpore, forty miles south of Mooltan, who had faithfully maintained his alliance with the Company since the visit of Captain Burnes in 1832, was requested by the Resident, at the instance of Lieutenant Edwardes, to advance with his army to the attack of Moolraj. Lieutenant Edwardes formed a junction with his troops on the 18th June at Kineyree, but found them in a state of complete disorganization, their helpless commander sitting under a tree counting his beads and muttering his prayers. With great difficulty he established something like order in their ranks before they were attacked by Moolraj, who came down upon them with a body of 8,000 Sikhs and two guns. The action was fiercely contested for many hours, and the result was for a time doubtful, but at three in the afternoon the timely arrival of Colonel Cortland's regiments with his guns decided the fortune of the day, and the Mooltan army fled in confusion from the field. After the victory, Lieutenant Edwardes importuned the Resident to reinforce him, and preparations were made for the despatch of an adequate force, but the Commander-in-chief again interposed his authority, because the season was not yet favourable, and the siege train to be drawn by bullocks had not as yet moved from Cawnpore. On the 28th June, Lieutenant

Battle of Kineyree, 18th June, 1848.

Digitized by Google

Edwardes was strengthened by the accession of 4,000 men, brought by Imam-ood-deen, who had returned to his allegiance, which raised his force, including the Bhawulpore contingent, to 18,000. Moolraj, alarmed at the growing power of his opponents, advanced against them with his whole force, which had been in the meantime augmented by deserters to 11,000, supported by eleven guns, and met them at Sudoosain, in the neighbourhood of his capital. After a cannonade of several hours, a brilliant charge of one of Colonel Cortland's regiments, led by an office clerk of the name of Quin, decided the action. The Mooltan troops recoiled from the assault, and fled. Moolraj was thrown from his elephant by a cannon ball, and, mounting a horse, joined the fugitives, and sought shelter within the walls of the city. The spirited efforts of the young lieutenant had thus, in the space of a few weeks, recovered the province and shut up the rebel in his citadel. "Now," he wrote to the Resident, "is the time to strike; it is painful to see that I have got to the end of my tether." He represented in strong terms the impolicy of condemning his raw levies to a state of inactivity for three or four months, exposed to the intrigues and allurements of Moolraj's emissaries, while the fermentation in the Punjab was daily becoming more intense.

Battle of Sudoosain, 1st July, 1848.

Sir Frederick Currie determined to lose no time in following up the successful exertions of Lieutenant Edwardes, and took upon himself the responsibility of ordering General Whish to prepare the moveable brigade for an immediate march to Mooltan. Lord Gough refrained from offering any opposition to the movement of this force, but wisely determined to double its strength and raise it to 7,000 men, of whom a third were Europeans, and to send thirty-four guns with it. Lord Dalhousie said that although his opinion of the proper period for action had undergone no change, he was anxious to maintain the authority of the Resident, and directed him, at all hazards, to carry out the policy he had resolved upon with vigour. Meanwhile,

Despatch of General Whish, 1848.

Digitized by Google

Lieutenant Edwardes was joined by a Sikh force which the Lahore durbar had been permitted to despatch to Mooltan under Shere Sing, one of the most influential chiefs in the Punjab, ostensibly to co-operate against Moolraj, but in reality, as it subsequently appeared, to embrace every opportunity of supporting his rebellion. It was no secret at Lahore that both he and his troops were thoroughly disaffected, and the great object of the Resident, after they had proceeded on their march, was to prevent their being brought in contact with Moolraj and his bands. Shere Sing's army was accordingly directed to halt within fifty miles of Mooltan, but, after the victory of the 1st July, he was permitted to continue his progress to that town. This was the cardinal error of the first period of the campaign, and it entailed the most disastrous results. Shere Sing did not hesitate to avow that his soldiers were incessantly urging him to join the revolt, and that if Lieutenant Edwardes had not been victorious at Sudoosain they would have gone over to Moolraj to a man. During the time they were encamped before Mooltan not a day passed without some desertions to the enemy, and the peril of the British commander was seriously augmented by the presence of these worse than doubtful allies.

The intrigues of the Maharanee, 1848.

The events which transpired at Lahore during these proceedings exposed the mine upon which we had been for some time sitting in the Punjab. The Maharanee, a woman of insatiable ambition and indefatigable intrigue, and animated with a spirit of bitter hostility to British ascendency, had been placed under restraint at a place called Shakoopoor, a few miles from Lahore, and her annual allowance of a lac and a-half of rupees had been reduced to 4,000. In May, 1848, a conspiracy to corrupt the troops at Lahore was discovered and traced to her machinations, and two of her agents were convicted and executed. The investigation conducted on this occasion disclosed the startling fact that she had been engaged for some time in a conspiracy against us, and that all the chiefs of the Lahore

Digitized by Google

durbar, with the exception of two, had agreed to co-operate with her for our expulsion. It was likewise asserted that Khan Sing, who accompanied Mr. Agnew to Mooltan, was himself deeply implicated in the plot, and had engaged to raise the province as soon as he had obtained possession of the citadel. She had extended her intrigues to Cabul, to Candahar, to Cashmere, to the Sikh protected states, and even to the princes of Rajpootana; and had endeavoured to organize a confederacy against British authority as ramified as that which Bajee Rao had projected thirty years before. The whole body of Sikh troops in the durbar army was ripe for revolt. There did not exist a chief or an officer who was not eager to shake off the yoke of the foreigners, and again to enshrine the national idol of Khalsa supremacy. There was not an inch of firm ground under our feet throughout the country of the five rivers. Sir Frederick considered that in these circumstances there could be no peace or security while the Maharanee continued in the Punjab, fomenting disaffection; and, by an unexpected and adroit movement, which anticipated all opposition, he caused her to be conveyed across the Sutlege and transferred to the care of the Resident at Benares, the warder of the dethroned princes and princesses of India.

Chutter Sing, 1848.

The spirit of revolt now began openly to develope itself. Chutter Sing, the father of Shere Sing, who had been intrusted with the government of the province of Hazara, lying on the left bank of the Indus, exhibited unequivocal signs of disaffection, and caused Colonel Canora, one of Runjeet Sing's old officers, to be put to death, because he refused to move his guns without the orders of the political agent. The Resident was slow to credit his treachery, and Jhunda Sing, who was supposed to possess more influence over him than any other man, was sent to endeavour to keep him to his allegiance. Jhunda, however, turned traitor himself, and joined the standard of Chutter Sing, who threw off the mask, and proceeded to attack Captain Nicholson, whom Major Lawrence had promptly sent down to hold Attok, the key

Digitized by Google

of the Indus. Throughout the month of August, Chutter Sing adjured his son Shere Sing to join the national revolt, but he continued to assure Lieutenant Edwardes of his unalterable fidelity, professed to show all the communications he had received from his father, and offered to take an oath of allegiance on the holy book.

General Whish's operations, 1848.

General Whish's brigades, consisting of about 7,000 men, with a battering train, started for Mooltan at the latter end of July, but, though the distance was only two hundred and twenty miles, and he enjoyed the unrivalled convenience of water carriage down the stream, the force was thirty-nine days in reaching its destination. This procrastination, combined with the open defection of Chutter Sing, enabled Moolraj to augment the strength of his army, and to improve the defences of the town and the fort, while it also inspired him with increased confidence. Strange to say, it was found that General Whish's troops were more healthy during their progress to Mooltan than they had been in cantonments, and it was manifest that the unsuitableness of the season, which was urged as the ground of objection to an early and prompt movement, was a mere bugbear. The battering train at length reached Mooltan on the 3rd September, and the garrison was summoned to an unconditional surrender, not, however, in the name of the Maharajah, the actual sovereign of the Punjab, but in that of Her Majesty the Queen of England; and the Sikhs were thus led to the conclusion that we had already determined to confiscate the country. Mooltan, from its position on the Chenab and on the highway of commerce between Central Asia and Hindostan, was one of the most important towns in the Punjab. The fort was one of the strongest in India, erected on elevated ground, with walls substantially built of brick, about forty feet high, strengthened by thirty towers, and protected by a ditch twenty feet wide. It was garrisoned by about 2,000 men, and the town, which was likewise strongly fortified, by some 10,000 more. Moolraj had fifty-two guns at his

Digitized by Google

command. The first assault was made on the suburban outworks, which were defended with great resolution, and were not carried without the loss of 272 killed and wounded, of whom seventeen were officers. A good position was thus obtained for bombarding the town; but within eight days after the batteries had opened, all operations were at once brought to a close. Shere Sing yielded at length to the importunity of his father and the eagerness of his troops, and on the 14th September broke up his camp, ordered the "drum of religion" to strike up, and passed over to the enemy with 5,000 troops, two mortars and ten guns. After this defection, General Whish found it impossible to continue the siege, and accordingly abandoned the trenches the next day, and retired to a position in the vicinity of the town, well adapted for the reception of provisions by water. There he threw up entrenchments, waiting the arrival of reinforcements, and was, in fact, besieged in his turn. Shere Sing immediately issued a proclamation "by direction of the holy Gooroo," under the seals of nine of the chiefs in his army, announcing a religious war against the "cruel Feringees," and calling upon all who eat the salt of the sovereign of the Khalsa, Duleep Sing, to join the standard of the raja Shere Sing and the dewan Moolraj, to cut off the posts, and to put every European to death.

General revolt in the Punjab, 1848.

The whole of the Punjab was now in a state of revolt, with the exception of the two Sikh forces at Peshawur and Bunnoo across the Indus, and they only waited for a fit opportunity to join their fellow countrymen. The chiefs who had received especial distinction and advantage from the British authorities were among the leaders of the rebellion. The veterans of Runjeet Sing's army, scattered through the country, burned with impatience to meet the British battalions in the field, recover their lost honour, and restore the religious supremacy and the military glories of the Khalsa. The paltry outbreak of Moolraj, fostered by the folly of delay, had grown into a portentous war. Lord Dalhousie found that he had a great crisis to face, and the bravest soldiers in India, animated

Digitized by Google

by a patriotic enthusiasm, to encounter. The work which had taxed the utmost powers of his experienced and military predecessor was now to be done over again, and he showed himself fully equal to the emergency. In writing to the Secret Committee he stated that no other course was now open to us but to prosecute a general Punjab war with vigour, and ultimately to occupy the country with our troops. Preparations were accordingly made to take the field in earnest. An army was called up from Bombay to reinforce General Whish, and the Governor, Sir George Clerk, who had foreboded no good from the premature deputation of Mr. Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson to Mooltan, organized a force of 7,000 men to move into the Punjab. An addition of 17,000 men was made to the strength of the Bengal regiments, and the army destined for operations in the Punjab was ordered to assemble at Ferozepore. On the 10th October Lord Dalhousie proceeded towards the scene of operations; and, at a farewell entertainment given to him at Barrackpore, took occasion to say in the course of his speech, "Unwarned by precedent, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war, and on my word, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance."

Movements of Shere Sing, 1848.

Shere Sing was received with great coldness and mistrust by Moolraj, who wished him to desert the English, but not to encumber Mooltan with his presence. His troops were not permitted to enter the town till they had taken an oath of fidelity to the rebel cause on the holy book, and even then were required to encamp under the guns of the fort, the gates of which were closed against them. Moolraj was especially apprehensive that Shere Sing would make a large demand of money, and hit upon the expedient of promising pay to his troops, on condition that he should go forth and engage in one good fight with General Whish; but this he thought fit to decline. He had objects of ambition of his own. His father had directed him to advance to Guzerat, which he selected as the rendezvous of the Sikh troops, little dreaming that it was destined soon after to be the grave of

Digitized by Google

their independence. He accordingly quitted Mooltan twenty-five days after his revolt, and on the 9th October marched towards the Ravee with an army of 5,000 men, swelled at every stage by the old soldiers of the Khalsa army, who daily flocked to his standard. He advanced up to Jung on the left bank of the Chenab, laying waste the country as he proceeded, and announcing his intention to attack the city of Lahore. He pushed one of his divisions up to a position only twenty miles distant from the capital, and had the audacity to burn a bridge of boats on the Ravee, the flames of which were visible from the battlements of the citadel. The spirit of enterprise which these movements exhibited astounded the Resident, and he became importunate with the Commander-in-chief for immediate reinforcements. The capital, he said, was hemmed in and menaced by the rebels, who were raising the country within twelve miles of it, and if an attack were made on the cantonments, it would be supported by a simultaneous rising in the city, which contained 30,000 swordsmen, and a population universally disaffected; the Government would thus be placed in a very critical and disgraceful position. Happily, Shere Sing was ignorant of the defenceless situation in which the capital had been unaccountably left for many weeks after he and his father were known to be in open rebellion with 15,000 gallant and enthusiastic Sikhs under their banners. Two regiments of infantry, together with one of cavalry, and some artillery were despatched from Ferozepore for the defence of Lahore, but they marched leisurely at the rate of eight miles a-day. Shere Sing, however, instead of attacking the city, marched westward to meet the Bunnoo troops, consisting of four regiments of infantry, one of cavalry, six troops of horse artillery and four guns, who had at length mutinied and murdered their officers. The Resident was relieved from his anxieties by the arrival of the Ferozepore brigade under Colonel Cureton, to whom the Commander-in-chief issued a positive and unqualified injunction to undertake no active measure whatever till he himself came up with the main army.

Digitized by Google

Alliance with Dost Mahomed, 1848.

Chutter Sing, having raised the standard of rebellion, and, as he said, "devoted his head to God and his arms to the Khalsa," opened negotiations with Cabul, and made Dost Mahomed the offer of the province of Peshawur, on condition of his joining the crusade against the English. The alliance, which was speedily completed, was one of the most singular compacts even in oriental history. The Dost had always considered the Sikhs the most inveterate enemies of his nation and his creed. Runjeet Sing had for twenty years been engaged in dismembering the Afghan monarchy, from which he had wrested the provinces of Cashmere, Mooltan, and Peshawur, as well as other territories on both sides the Indus. He had joined the British Government in the expedition to Cabul, which resulted in sending the Dost a houseless wanderer to Bokhara, and eventually a captive to Calcutta. The Dost had seen the mosques at Peshawur desecrated by the infidel Sikhs, and the Mahomedan population of the Punjab trampled under foot by religious intolerance. It was a strong indication of the hopes which our procrastination had excited, that he who had beheld with his own eyes the magnitude of our resources, and witnessed the extinction of Runjeet Sing's power, should bury in oblivion his animosity to the Sikhs, and join an incipient revolt directed against our supremacy. So elated was he with the prospect of revenge, that he not only promised to join the insurgents with his contingent, but addressed an impertinent letter to the British authorities, exulting in the acquisition of Peshawur, and offering his good offices to mediate between them and the Sikhs.

Major Lawrence at Peshawur, 1848.

The province of Peshawur which Chutter Sing sold to the Afghans, was under the political charge of Sir George—then Major—Lawrence, one of the Lawrence brothers, and was garrisoned by a body of 8,000 Sikh troops, upon whose fidelity little reliance could be placed, now that the whole atmosphere was charged with treason. Chutter Sing never ceased to press them to join his standard, and it required all the tact of the Major, and the

Digitized by Google

great influence which he had acquired over them, to maintain his post in these desperate circumstances. He had repeatedly entreated that a brigade might be sent up to hold the province, but though a column was at one time warned for that service, it was speedily countermanded. The troops continued to resist the offers of Chutter Sing so steadily, that, in despair of success, he was about to march from the Indus to join his son, when his object was accomplished through the agency of Sultan Mahomed, the brother of Dost Mahomed, and the personification of Afghan perfidy. He was under peculiar obligations to Sir Henry Lawrence, who found him a prisoner at Lahore, and not only restored him to liberty, but reinstated him in his jageers at Peshawur. His gratitude was manifested by seducing the troops from their allegiance, and pressing them to assault the brother of his benefactor. Under his instigation they marched down to the Residency on the evening of the 24th October and attacked it with shot, shrapnell and grape. The Major and Lieutenant Bowie, with Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, quitted it under the escort of fifty Afghan horse, and the soldiers immediately rushed in and sacked it. On the morning of the attack, Sultan Mahomed had given the most solemn assurances of protection to the Major and his party, and offered to lead them in safety to his own town of Kohat. Soon after their arrival there, however, he sold them to Chutter Sing, who conducted them back as prisoners to Peshawur, where they were strictly guarded, but otherwise treated with great respect.

The grand army, 1848. The grand army was at length assembled in the month of October at Ferozepore. It was weak in infantry, but strong in artillery. An entire division was waiting at Mooltan for the junction of the Bombay column to renew the siege; Brigadier Wheler was engaged in operations in the Jullunder; a considerable garrison was required for Lahore, and there was a reserve force under Sir Dudley Hill. Lord Gough had under his command four British and eleven native infantry regiments. Upwards of sixty field

Digitized by Google

guns were attached to the divisions of cavalry and infantry, and eight howitzers and ten eighteen pounders had been equipped with good forethought to be drawn by elephants and bullocks, and manœuvred with the readiness of field artillery. The cavalry consisted of three noble regiments of British horse, backed by five regiments of light cavalry, and five complete corps of irregular horse under the command of the veteran Hearsey, the adjutant of Fitzgerald at the battle of Seetabuldee, thirty-one years before. Lord Gough took the command of the army early in November, and crossed the Ravee on the morning of the 16th, when the actual operations of the army may be said to have commenced—seven months after the murder of the two officers at Mooltan. Shere Sing, by moving to the northward, had compelled the British to operate on two lines. While they were combining their forces before Mooltan, they had at the same time to confront the insurrection in the superior delta of the five rivers, and for this double operation the force of infantry was manifestly feeble. Shere Sing, with about 15,000 Sikhs, had taken up a position at Ramnugur, on the Chenab, of which he occupied both banks. His main force was encamped on the right bank, protected by batteries mounting twenty-eight guns, and sufficiently covered from any fire that could be opened from the opposite bank. He had boats on the river and the command of a ford, and had ventured without much risk to push a detachment across. Lord Gough opened the campaign on the morning of the 22nd November by marching down to Ramnugur, while his heavy guns, his pontoon, and his engineer establishment were far in the rear. According to some of the best military authorities his movements should have been confined to a *reconnaissance en force*, and a feint attack, while his infantry and cavalry advanced to Wuzeerabad, thirty miles higher up on the great high road of the Punjab. There he might have established a bridge and awaited the arrival of his guns, and encountered Shere Sing to advantage, if, abandoning his entrenchments, he advanced against him. He resolved, however, to attack

Digitized by Google

at once the Sikh force on the left bank at Ramnugur, and drive it across the river. After a slight skirmish, the fire of the light artillery, consisting of twelve guns, drove back the Sikhs, when Shere Sing opened an irresistible fire of shot and shell on the British force from his batteries planted upon the high ground on the other side of the river. The order was given to limber up and retire, but one gun and two waggons could not be extricated from the sand. Instead of spiking the gun and blowing up the waggons, valuable time was lost in endeavouring to extricate them. A formidable body of the enemy rushed over, but Captain Ouvry gallantly charged among them to cover the retreat of the artillery, though not without loss, as the broken ground had by this time been occupied by the enemy's musketeers. The infantry was then marched down to the ridge which marked the height of the river during the rains, and from that elevation the strength of the Sikh position became fully visible. As the British cavalry and infantry retired, several thousand of the enemy's horse crossed the ford towards the deserted gun, and their marksmen crowded over, while the battery of twenty-eight guns played incessantly on our receding force. Here the operations of the day should have terminated, as any further movement against such fearful odds would have been an act of infatuation; but it was committed. Colonel William Havelock, in command of the 14th Dragoons, one of the most gallant officers in the Queen's service, who had earned laurels in the Peninsula and at Waterloo, rashly solicited permission to charge the Sikhs, and in an evil hour it would appear to have been granted by the Commander-in-chief. Supported by the 5th cavalry, he rushed forward and at once cleared the bank of the enemy, and then pursued them down into the sands. The guns from the opposite bank, as well as those which had been brought over in haste, to the number of eight, opened on the dragoons; their horses became exhausted and sunk deeper and deeper in the sand. Colonel Havelock was surrounded by the enemy and killed, but not

Action of Ramnugur, 1848.

Digitized by Google

Death of Colonel Havelock and Colonel Cureton, 1848.

before he had felled three or four of his assailants. In this attack the gallant and experienced Colonel Cureton, who had raised himself to distinction from the ranks in which he had enlisted as a runaway lad, was lost to the army. The death of two such men would have been sufficient to mar congratulations on a victory, but that their lives should have been sacrificed in this idle and bootless skirmish, served to deepen the regrets of the army. The dry sandy bed of a large stream swept by the fire of twenty-eight guns was not the field for a cavalry action. It may here be incidentally noticed, that two days after the fight at Ramnugur, a paper was transmitted to Lord Dalhousie from Shere Sing's camp, containing the Sikh justification of the revolt, which they rested on the elevation of the raja Golab Sing, a Rajpoot, the banishment of the Maharanee, the disregard of Sikh prejudices, the advancement of Mahomedans, and, above all, the slaughter of the cow.

Action of Sadoolapore, 1848.

Lord Gough, having withdrawn his troops after the action on the 22nd beyond the reach of Shere Sing's batteries, awaited for a week the arrival of his heavy guns and his pontoon. Any attempt to assail the strong position of the Sikhs on the Chenab in front could only be the dictate of the wildest folly, and it was wisely determined to throw a strong division across the river higher up, and move down upon the left flank of their entrenchments, while the Commander-in-chief occupied their attention by a cannonade in front. Sir Joseph Thackwell, an officer who had acquired celebrity in the Peninsula, was nominated to the command of the turning force, which consisted of 8,000 horse, foot, and artillery, with thirty field pieces and two heavy guns. He marched an hour after midnight on the 1st December, and reached Wuzeerabad, twenty-four miles up the river, where, with the aid of boats collected by the activity of Captain Nicholson, a distinguished political officer, he crossed the Chenab by midday of the 2nd, and thus transferred the mastery of the river from the Sikhs to the British. After a

Digitized by Google

hasty meal his force marched down twelve miles towards the enemy's position. At midnight he received instructions from Lord Gough to make an attack on the flank of Shere Sing's encampment in the morning, while the main army crossed over at Ramnugur to cooperate with his movements; but he had not proceeded more than six miles when another communication from head-quarters informed him that the army could not cross for want of boats, but that General Godby had been despatched with a brigade to cross the stream six miles higher up and unite with him. He was instructed to aid the movements of that brigade, but to suspend any attack on the Sikhs till it had joined him; and he accordingly despatched a native regiment to secure the ford. At two in the afternoon his men, who had tasted little food for forty-eight hours, were partaking of a light refreshment, when the rushing sound of round shot made them start to their feet and take to their arms. Shere Sing, on hearing of Sir Joseph's movement, withdrew his army from its position at Ramnugur, and marched down to meet him, leaving Lord Gough to expend his powder and shot upon an empty encampment. Sir Joseph, who had proceeded to the ford in search of Brigadier Godby, hastened back on hearing of the attack of the Sikhs, and rectified his position by withdrawing his troops two hundred yards from fields of lofty sugar cane into clear ground. The Sikhs perceiving this movement, rushed forward with loud shouts of "the Feringees are flying." The action took place at the village of Sadoolapore, where for two hours the British force sustained the incessant fire of the enemy without returning a shot till they were fully within range, when the artillery opened with deadly effect. During the engagement Sir Joseph received orders from Lord Gough to act according to his own discretion as to attacking the Sikhs without waiting for General Godby; but there remained only one short hour of daylight. By half past four the hostile cannon began to slacken, and it was evident that the Sikhs had failed in their attack, but Sir Joseph did not deem it prudent to

Digitized by Google

advance upon them. His force consisted of only two brigades; a regiment was at the ford, and General Godby's brigade had not joined him. The enemy were supposed to number 30,000, with forty pieces of cannon; they were strongly posted in a line of three villages, and if driven from them, might have retired on their camp, which could only have been stormed in darkness. With the example of Moodkee and Ferozeshuhur before him, Sir Joseph wisely determined not to precipitate his brave troops, broken down and wearied as they were, into a labyrinth of tents, waggons, and tumbrils, among exploding mines and expense magazines. At midnight the barking of dogs betrayed the movement of the Sikh army, and when the General put his army in motion to pursue them in the morning, he found that they were already beyond his reach. Under cover of the night, Shere Sing had removed all his guns and ammunition towards the Jhelum, "leaving not a goat behind." The advantage of the action doubtless rested with him, for he had marched away at his own will and leisure to a better position, but Lord Gough thought fit to claim the victory, and in a magniloquent despatch announced that "it had pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe to the British arms the most successful issue to the extensive combinations rendered necessary to effect the passage of the Chenab and the defeat and dispersion of the Sikh force." The community in India, spoiled by marvellously good fortune, impugned the military strategy which enabled the Sikh general to escape with all his cannon and with his army unscathed; men of sanguine temperament denounced his over caution, but this crude condemnation has been rectified by the cool judgment of professional criticism, and Sir Joseph's merits have been fully appreciated, not less for saving his troops on the night of the 3rd December from unprofitable loss, and the British arms from the hazard of serious disaster, than for his successful passage of the river.

Noble efforts of the Political Officers, 1848. While the elements of rebellion were reeking throughout the Punjab and the Commander-in-

Digitized by Google

chief was waiting for the arrival of the cold weather, British interests in the various districts of the Punjab were maintained by the political officers with a degree of skill and energy which reflected the highest credit on the Company's service. Mr. John Lawrence had been entrusted with the charge of the Jullunder dooab, the Sikh province beyond the Sutlege which Lord Hardinge had annexed to the British territories. A detachment of rebel Sikhs crossed the Ravee and laid siege to an important fortress. One raja broke out in the upper range of hills, and another followed his example in the lower range, and the whole province was on the point of being enveloped in the flames of revolt. Mr. Lawrence had now the first opportunity of exhibiting that spirit of enterprise, energy, and resolution which was developed on a larger scale in the Punjab nine years later during the Sepoy mutiny, and which eventually led him up to the highest seat in the empire. By the absence of the General, he and his assistants were left to act on their own discretion. He collected a force of hill men and of Sikhs, and boldly led them against their own countrymen, captured or dispersed the insurgents, and in the short period of thirteen days extinguished all opposition, and restored peace and order to the province. On the western frontier, along the line of the Indus, Captain Abbott, of Khiva celebrity, Captain Nicholson, Lieutenant Lumsden, and Lieutenant Taylor continued for many months to maintain their isolated and perilous positions with a chivalrous bearing in the midst of universal treachery. On the first suspicion of Chutter Sing's disloyalty, Major Lawrence had wisely despatched Captain Nicholson to secure Attok; and that important post was subsequently held by Captain Herbert with a small body of Mahomedan troops. The fort was in so dilapidated a state that it could not have withstood a scientific and vigorous attack for six hours, but with a spirit of heroism which carries the mind back to the defence of Arcot, he maintained his post against the utmost efforts of the Sikhs for six weeks. Dost Mahomed at length made his appearance

Digitized by Google

on the Indus, and summoned all true-believers to join his standard and take the field against the infidels. To ascertain the feelings of the garrison, Captain Herbert held a durbar, when his native officers and men frankly avowed that their families were in the power of the Dost, and that it would be dangerous for them to resist his commands. He found it necessary therefore to abandon the fort, and quitted it at midnight on a raft, but was seized as he passed down the river, and sent to join Major Lawrence in captivity at Peshawur. The reward which Captain Herbert received for his gallantry was what all officers most coveted, the commendation of Lord Dalhousie, who announced to India that he had maintained his position "with a settled firmness and a high-minded constancy."

Movements of the Sikh and British Forces, 1848-49.

The Sikhs retired from Sadoolapore on the night of the 3rd December with their artillery, the chief ground of their confidence, still entire, the spirit of the troops still unbroken, and the audacity of the chieftains still buoyant. With that skill which distinguished the general officers among the Sikhs, Shere Sing took up a position of great strength on the Jhelum, with his rear resting on that river, his main body posted in ravines strengthened by field works, and his front covered by a broad and dense belt of jungle. Throughout the month of December and the first half of January, the British army remained inactive between the Jhelum and the Chenab. This policy, which has been the subject of much censure, was in some measure owing to the restrictions imposed on the movements of the force by Lord Dalhousie, who had requested Lord Gough, after the battle of Sadoolapore, "on no consideration to advance beyond the Chenab except for the purpose of attacking Shere Sing in the position he then held, without further communication with him." He had, in fact, injudiciously interfered with the military dispositions of the Commander-in-chief, on whom the responsibility of the campaign rested. To what extent Lord Hardinge had regulated and controlled the movements of the

Digitized by Google

army in the first Sikh war was well known, but he was a soldier, and a general of a far higher standard than the Commander-in-chief, whereas Lord Dalhousie was a young civilian with no military experience. It appears that he was not long perceiving the false position in which he had thus placed himself, and before the 22nd December informed Lord Gough that "if he could satisfy his own judgment regarding the state of his supplies, his supports and communications, and that the enemy might be attacked with such force as he may have safely disposable, and without heavy loss, he should be happy to see a blow struck that would destroy him, add honour to the British arms, and avert the prospect of a protracted and costly war." Whatever responsibility may be attached to the inactivity of the force for three weeks after this date, rests with the military authorities. But, however injudicious may have been this act of interference on the part of the Governor-General, subsequent events gave reason to regret that it was not prolonged. Indeed, the whole plan of the campaign has been condemned by the judgment of the highest military authorities. In their opinion, Lord Gough would have exercised a wise discretion if he had remained in observation, on the left bank of the Chenab, regarding himself as covering the siege of Mooltan on the one hand, and Lahore on the other, holding Shere Sing in check, cutting off his supplies, watching his movements northward and southward, and preventing the despatch of a single soldier to the aid of Moolraj; and then,—as was ultimately done,—throwing the united British force with irresistible power on the Sikh army. This plan would have involved the inactivity of three months, and incurred the denunciations of the press, but it would have saved us the disasters of Ramnugur and Chillianwalla.

Advance to Chillianwalla, 1849.

The army was reviewed at Lassoorie by Lord Gough on the 11th January, and advanced the next day to Dingee, a distance of twelve miles. The task before it was arduous. In conflicts with other races in India it had been the boast of the British troops that they

Digitized by Google

never cared to count their enemies, and were only anxious to prevent their escape. Bur the Sikhs were the boldest and most resolute foes who had ever tried the metal of the British soldier in the east, and on this occasion two weak infantry divisions were about to attack a Sikh force of 30,000 men, with a battery of sixty guns, in one of the strongest positions they had ever taken up, and on ground where our powerful cavalry had no room for manœuvering. On the 13th, the army advanced with the intention of turning the enemy's left at Russool, but a nearer approach shewed it covered with so dense a jungle that Lord Gough wisely resolved to take up a position for the day, and reconnoitre it more perfectly on the morrow. In 1845, before a sword had been drawn, the British commanders had been warned by those best acquainted with the tactics of the Sikhs, that they were not to be dreaded as assailants, but that an entrenched position was defended by them with a degree of obstinacy hardly to be overcome by human efforts. The correctness of this observation was grievously exemplified at Ferozeshuhur and Sobraon. Hence it was always desirable so to manœuvre as to oblige them to take the initiative, and on the present occasion this advantage had been fortuitously gained. On approaching Chillianwalla, it became evident that they had quitted their strong entrenchments on the heights of Russool, and marched down into the plain. A picket of Sikhs was driven in from a low bare hill, and the staff, on ascending it, obtained a distinct view of their line, covered indeed by a thick jungle, but ready to combat without the usual support of their bulwarks. Lord Gough had intended to defer the attack till a more careful reconnaissance had been effected, and had issued orders to mark out the ground for the encampment. This duty had already commenced, when a few shots from some field pieces the Sikhs had pushed forward, dropped near him. The spirit of defiance and antagonism at once overcame his better judgment, and, rejecting all advice and trampling on every remonstrance, he gave orders to prepare for immediate action. The Sikhs opened a continuous roar of fire from

Digitized by Google

a jungle so thick that nothing was offered as a mark for the British artillery but the flash and smoke of the hostile guns. This cannonade lasted an hour, or an hour and a half, according to different reports, and at three in the afternoon in the month of January, with only an hour or two of daylight left, undeterred by the example of Moodkee and Ferozeshuhur, where success was lost in the darkness, the divisions were ordered to advance.

Chillianwalla—the two Infantry Divisions, 1849.

The division of General Campbell, afterwards Lord Clyde, was the first to push forward. Of its two brigades, that commanded by Brigadier Hoggan, under the General's personal superintendence, though fiercely opposed by heavy odds, won the ground in its front; but the brigade of Brigadier Pennycuick was destined to a fearful repulse. The 24th Foot, which formed a portion of it, advanced with an ardour that seemed to promise victory, but while yet at a distance from the enemy, broke into too rapid a pace, outstripped the native regiments, and rushed breathless and confused upon the enemy's guns. It received a deadly shower of grape, and while shattered by its fatal effects, was torn to pieces by a musketry fire from Sikh troops, masked by a screen of jungle. The native regiments, when they came up, were unable to restore the battle. The whole brigade was thrown into confusion, and the most desperate efforts of the officers were of no avail to establish order. Brigadier Pennycuick was slain in the fore front of the fight; Colonel Brookes, commanding the 24th, fell among the guns. The Sikhs rushed forward with fury, sword in hand, and soon converted the rude repulse into incurable rout. The colours of the regiment fell into their hands, but not until twenty-three officers and 459 non-commissioned officers and men had been killed or wounded. Lord Gough, on receiving a report of this sanguinary check, ordered up the reserve under Brigadier Penny, but it took a wrong direction and missed its way in the forest. General Campbell, who had been victorious in his own front, observing the disaster, spiked the guns he had captured, and advancing

Digitized by Google

rapidly to the rescue, snatched the victory from the enemy, and captured the guns which had poured this deadly fire on the brigade. Sir Walter Gilbert's division on the right was not checkered by disaster, but its advantages were not gained without heroic efforts and serious loss. His left brigade, led with rare gallantry, by Brigadier Mountain, carried the enemy's position, and captured several pieces of ordnance. But the 56th Native Infantry lost its colours, and its gallant commander, Major Bamfield, received a mortal wound, and lay dying, side by side in the same hospital tent with his brave son, who had also been struck down. The other brigade consisting of the 2nd Europeans and two native regiments, and led by Brigadier Godby, was severely tested. The Europeans, attacked on numerous points, succeeded in putting the Sikhs to flight, but pursuit in a forest where they could not see twenty yards before them, was vain, and they halted to collect their wounded, when a sudden fire was opened on them by a body of Sikhs who had turned their flank unperceived, and they would have been inevitably overwhelmed but for the field battery of Major Dawes, of Jellalabad renown, who poured in a shower of grape on the enemy, as coolly as if he had been on parade. The struggle was terrific, and, to use the language of an eye-witness, it seemed as if the very air teemed with balls and bullets. The Sikhs fought like demons, but the Europeans succeeded in sweeping them from the ground and remained masters of the field.

Movements of the Cavalry, 1848

The adventures of the cavalry were painful and humiliating. The attack on the Sikh position, which had never been reconnoitered, was in a parallel line. The several brigades of foot opposed to the enemy in front were outflanked by their more extended line. To protect the extreme flanks of the infantry, Lord Gough brought his cavalry into first line, and it was thus opposed to an unapproachable artillery fire and to entanglement in the recesses of the forest; but the actual mischief even exceeded what might have been anticipated from such defective

Digitized by Google

tactics. On the right flank, in prolongation of the infantry, were posted the 14th Dragoons, the 9th Lancers, and two native cavalry regiments. The troops of artillery attached to the brigade were planted in the rear and could not therefore open fire from a single gun. This strong cavalry brigade was entrusted to Brigadier Pope, who had been an active officer in his youth, but was now unable to mount his horse without assistance. He was, moreover, of a fanciful and irritable temper, and obstinately wedded to his old fashioned notions of cavalry manœuvre. He advanced his four regiments formed in a single line and though the forest was dense, not a skirmisher was sent forward to explore the way, and no reserve or supporting column was provided against temporary reverse. As the line advanced, first at a walk and then at a trot, it was broken up by trees and clumps of brushwood into numerous series of small sections, doubled behind each other. In this state of things a small body of Sikh horse, intoxicated with drugs, rushed in a mass upon the centre, wounded the brigadier, and caused a sensation of terror among the native cavalry which it was found impossible to counteract. Just at this crisis, some one in the ranks of the 14th Dragoons, whose name has never been ascertained, uttered the words, "threes about." The regiment at once turned to the rear and moved off in confusion, and, as the Sikh horse pressed on its track, galloped headlong in disgraceful panic through the cannon and waggons posted in its rear, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of its commander, Colonel King, and of the chaplain of the force, the Rev. Mr. Whiting, to rally the fugitives. The Sikh horse entered the ranks of the artillery along with the flying dragoons, and captured four guns; the disgrace of the brigade was irreparable. The success of the cavalry division on the left, commanded by Sir Joseph Thackwell, was marked by great gallantry. After a cannonade, in which the eighteen guns under Colonel Brind took an active share, a party of Sikh horse wound round its left and menaced the rear. Sir Joseph directed three squadrons

Digitized by Google

of the 5th native cavalry and a squadron of Greys under Captain Unett to charge the assailants, while he kept the rest of his brigade in reserve. The Sikh horse opened a heavy matchlock fire, and the native cavalry turned and fled; but Captain Unett with his dragoons forced his way through the Sikh ranks, nor halted in his impetuous career till he had reached the rear of the enemy, when, though severely wounded, he cut his way back to the brigade, and rejoined his applauding comrades, with the loss of forty-eight killed and wounded. The shades of evening put an end to the conflict. It was desirable to keep the ground which had been so hardly won, but it was hazardous to hold a position of which nothing was known. It was impossible to post pickets and guards in the darkness of the night. The troops were half dead with the fatigue of previous marching and manœuvring, and an arduous combat. They were parched with thirst and called loudly for water, but none could be procured except from the distant wells of Chillianwalla. A night of heavy rain was impending, which would have inundated the field and completed the disorganization of the force. With great reluctance, but with a sense of imperious necessity, Lord Gough withdrew the force to Chillianwalla, where the troops snatched a broken and fitful repose. Meanwhile, parties of Sikh troops and of the armed peasantry of the surrounding villages, traversed the forest in which the combat had taken place, stripped, plundered, and mutilated the slain, and with atrocious barbarity murdered the wounded. On the following morning, when the cavalry moved over the field, they found that every gun captured in the fight had been carried off, with the exception of twelve, which had been brought into camp the night before.

Results of the battle, 1849.

Such was the battle of Chillianwalla, the most sanguinary, and the nearest approximation to a defeat, of any of the great conflicts of the British power in India. The Sikhs were driven from their position, but their army was not overthrown, and retired without interruption to another position, three miles from the field. Twelve of their guns

Digitized by Google

remained in our possession, but four guns of the Horse Artillery were captured by them The colours of three regiments were lost in the battle, and the price paid by us for our doubtful victory was the loss of 2,357 fighting men and 89 officers killed and wounded. The moral results of the action were dismal; the character of the Sikhs for prowess was greatly elevated, the reputation of British cavalry was deplorably tarnished. The highest authority in India was constrained to pronounce it a victory, which was announced by salutes from every battery throughout the three Presidencies. But in this note of triumph we were anticipated by Shere Sing, who fired a salute the same evening in honour of what he considered his triumph, and another three days after to celebrate the arrival of his father with large reinforcements.

Public opinion on the battle, 1849.

While Chillianwalla was officially registered as a victory, it was regarded by the community in India of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, as a great calamity. The public did not cease to admire the private virtues, the quick perception, the indomitable energy, and the chivalrous valour of the Commander-in-chief, which rendered him the idol of the soldiery; but there was, nevertheless, a painful conviction that nature had not designed, or education and experience fitted him, for extensive and independent command. In England, the intelligence of this combat excited feelings of alarm and indignation. British cannon had been captured; British standards had been lost; British cavalry had fled before the enemy; a British regiment had been nearly annihilated; and the confidence of the native troops in our skill and good fortune had been rudely shaken. These disasters were traced to the defect of our military tactics. The India House was filled with alarms, which were shared by the Duke of Wellington. It was well known that while he had applauded the gallantry of the troops engaged at Maharajpore, he had freely criticised the manœuvres of the General. The Court of Directors and the Ministry were now of one mind as to the necessity of an immediate change in

Digitized by Google

the command. Sir Charles Napier was accordingly solicited by the Duke to proceed to India as Commander-in-chief, and he left England within three days. The supercession which had previously impended was now inflicted on Lord Gough, and he was made to taste the bitterness of recall; but before the arrival of his successor, the brilliant victory of Guzerat had turned the Punjab into a British province.

Recall of Lord Gough, 1849.

CHAPTER XL.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION—THE SECOND SIKH WAR—THE SECOND BURMESE WAR—THE SANTAL OUTBREAK, 1849—1855.

The second siege of Mooltan, 1848—1849

THE conflict at Chillianwalla had so seriously crippled the British infantry as to constrain the Commander-in-chief to wait for the capture of Mooltan, and the accession of General Whish's force, and the army was withdrawn to an entrenched camp at a little distance from the position of the enemy at Russool. It was by no means a pleasing reflection that this course, if it had been adopted at an early stage of the war, would have saved the army the loss and the disgrace attending that engagement. To the second siege of Mooltan we now turn. On the defection of Shere Sing on the 15th September, General Whish retired to a fortified position at Sooruj-koond, which possessed the advantage of being safe from all the attempts of the Sikhs, and open to the reception of supplies by water. By the unfortunate turn affairs had taken, all the advantages gained by the spirited exertions of Lieutenant Edwardes were lost, and Moolraj regained possession of the province and its resources, and laid in so abundant a store of provisions as to be under no necessity during the siege of indenting on his original stock for a single bag of rice. He was also enabled to

Digitized by Google

strengthen the fortifications so effectually as to render the second siege of the town and the citadel, notwithstanding the unexampled appliances commanded by the besiegers, more arduous than any in which a British army had ever been engaged in the plains of India. General Whish was doomed to more than three months of inaction, owing to the dilatoriness of the Bombay authorities, which has never been explained. Their troops did not reach Roree on the Indus before the 18th December, but no time was lost in marching them up to Mooltan, and it was accomplished within a week. The accession of the Bombay column, consisting of 9,000 men, raised General Whish's force to 17,000, with sixty-four heavy guns. The siege was reopened on the 27th December, and pushed on from day to day with uninterrupted vigour. To obtain a position for breaching the walls of the town, it was necessary to clear the suburbs, which was not, however, effected without the loss of 300 men and seventeen officers. The British batteries were then advanced against the town, and the discharge from cannon, howitzers, and mortars never ceased, day or night, for five days. A bold sally of 2,000 of the finest Sikh soldiers was driven back by Lieutenant Edwardes's levies, after a long and arduous conflict, in which Sir Henry Lawrence, who had just returned from England, bore a prominent part. On the third day, after a fierce cannonade from the batteries, to which Moolraj returned shot for shot, the fury of the combatants was suddenly arrested by a terrific convulsion. A shell from a mortar struck a mosque in the city which had been turned into a magazine and stored with 400,000 lbs. of gunpowder. It blew up with a tremendous explosion which shook the earth for many miles round, and darkened the air with smoke and fragments. After a pause of a minute or two, however, the firing recommenced with redoubled earnestness, the Bombay and Bengal artillery vieing with each other, and the enemy vieing with both. The breach was at length pronounced practicable, and the city, which had been defended with extraordinary resolution,

Digitized by Google

was stormed on the 2nd January. It presented a melancholy picture of desolation; the buildings had crumbled under the storm of shot and shell which had never ceased for a hundred and twenty hours. Of the wretched inhabitants, numbering 80,000 at the beginning of the siege, no small portion had been swept away by our cannon, or cut down by the cavalry as they endeavoured to escape destruction, and the streets were covered with dead and dying Sikhs. Notwithstanding the strictest injunctions of the generals, the capture was tarnished by the excesses of the troops, and by disgraceful plunder. After the fall of the town, no time was lost in pushing on the siege of the citadel, which Moolraj continued to defend with about 3,000 men. The howitzers played on it for several days with such fearful effect, tearing up the earth and brickwork of its massive walls, that on the 5th January Moolraj endeavoured to open a negotiation with General Whish, but was informed that no terms would be granted short of unconditional surrender. He resolved, therefore, to defend his stronghold to the last extremity, and for another fortnight he and his brave soldiers sustained the most awful fire of ordnance, direct and vertical, ever discharged in India within the same narrow compass. At length, when not a roof was left standing in the fort except in one bomb-proof gateway, and the incessant vollies from our batteries became insupportable to the troops, they demanded that he should either put himself at their head and cut his way through the ranks of the besiegers, or give up the fortress. The garrison surrendered at discretion on the 22nd January, and Moolraj rode out into the English camp, his soldiers and chiefs prostrating themselves before him in passionate devotion as he passed along. Mooltan was placed in charge of Lieutenant Edwardes, and the army moved up to join the Commander-in-chief.

Capture of the fort, 1849.

Movements of the British and Sikh forces, 1849.

The English and Sikh forces lay encamped within a few miles of each other for twenty-five days, the one at Chillianwalla and the other at

Digitized by Google

Russool. On the 6th February it was reported in the British camp that the whole of the Sikh army had marched unperceived round the British entrenchments, and was moving down upon Lahore. Lord Gough immediately despatched General Gilbert to ascertain the truth of the rumour, and he found the formidable encampment at Russool, the attempt to storm which, it was evident to him, would have entailed no ordinary sacrifice of human life, deserted by the enemy. This manœuvre of the Sikh generals has been variously attributed to the increasing deficiency of their supplies, to the exhaustion of their military chest, and to the eagerness of their troops for the excitement of action. It may have been dictated by the hope of fulfilling their boast of "cooking their food at Lahore," and then crossing the Sutlege, and, in combination with the protected Sikh states, rushing down on the British territories. Lord Gough, finding that the Sikhs had completely circumvented him, marched back to Lassoorie, and sent peremptory orders for the prompt advance of General Whish's force. Shere Sing, having thus turned Lord Gough's right, established his head-quarters at Guzerat on the 14th February, and the next day despatched a portion of his troops across the Chenab at Wuzeerabad. It was the opinion of a high military authority, that if he had kept his forces well together, and advanced rapidly across the Chenab, and fallen upon the troops marching up from Mooltan, he might have gained such advantages, in succession, over one or two of General Whish's brigades, as altogether to change the fate of the campaign; but he lacked the skill and energy for so masterly a strategy. To counteract the movement of Shere Sing, a European and a native regiment, with a corps of irregular cavalry and Colonel Brind's battery were pushed forward towards Wuzeerabad, but it was found that in consequence of some indication of danger, he had recalled the troops sent across the Chenab. Colonel Brind obtained the command of all the fords, and the advantage Shere Sing had gained by turning the flank of the British army was lost through hesitation and delay. On the appear-

Digitized by Google

ance of the British column, he retired to Guzerat, which, in the palmy days of the Khalsa, was considered a place of good omen, and there awaited the attack of the Commander-in-chief. The last brigade of General Whish's division joined the head-quarters on the 20th February, and Lord Gough moved up to the enemy's encampment with 20,000 men and a hundred pieces of cannon.

Arrangement of the Battle of Guzerat, 1849.

Brigadier Cheape, of the Bengal Engineers, who had conducted the siege of Mooltan with that professional talent and personal energy which ensured its success, joined the camp of Lord Gough a week before the battle of Guzerat, and assumed charge of the engineering department. With unwearied industry he applied himself to the task of obtaining the most accurate information of the position of the enemy, and the British army thus enjoyed the inestimable advantage,—the want of which produced the most lamentable effects at Maharajpore, at Moodkee, and at Chillianwalla,—of a thorough knowledge of the ground on which it was to deliver battle. The army of Shere Sing, estimated at 50,000 men with sixty pieces of cannon, was planted in front of the walled town of Guzerat, in the form of a crescent. The deep dry bed of the Dwara, which protected the right of the Sikh force, encircled the northern and western faces of the town, and then, taking a southern direction, bisected the British camp. The left of the Sikh force was supported on a streamlet, narrow and deep, flowing southward into the Chenab. Between the dry water course and the rivulet was a space of about three miles, with two villages, near Guzerat, denominated the greater and the less Habra, which were loopholed and filled with troops. On this ground were ranged the Sikh regiments, the remnant of Runjeet's disciplined battalions, now reorganized under the rebel leaders. Major Lawrence, who had been brought down a prisoner from Peshawur in the train of Chutter Sing, was treated with much consideration, and enjoyed great freedom of intercourse with the Sikh leaders. In the course of conversation they had

Digitized by Google

repeatedly expressed their surprise that the British commander should persist in neglecting to use his artillery, which the Sikhs considered formidable, and in thrusting his infantry, of which they made comparatively little account, up to the muzzle of their guns. He was permitted to visit his brother, Sir Henry Lawrence, on parole at Lahore, and communicated the remark to him. It was immediately transmitted to Lord Dalhousie, then encamped on the banks of the Sutlege, who is supposed to have urged it on the attention of the Commander-in-chief. The same valuable advice was earnestly and emphatically pressed on him by the able engineer officers of the force, and, under their guidance, it was laid down as the order of battle, that the artillery, in which no British army in India had ever been so strong, should be brought into full play, until the consistency of the Sikh ranks had been broken, and that no attempt should be made to charge with cold steel before this result had been secured. It was the inexorable persistence in this novel strategy to which the great victory is to be attributed.

The battle of Guzerat, 22nd February, 1849.

The infantry divisions and brigades advanced in parallel lines, with the cavalry on the flank and the guns in front. Eighty-four cannon, of which eighteen were of heavy calibre, were formed in two divisions in the centre, and opposed to the cannonade of sixty Sikh guns. The army, fresh from rest, and invigorated by food, advanced to the combat in the most complete order, at half-past seven. The morning was clear and cloudless, and the sun shone brightly on the extended line of bayonets and sabres. The Sikhs, ever ready with their batteries, opened them at a long range. The British infantry was halted beyond their reach, and the artillery, protected by skirmishers, pushed boldly to the front, and commenced a cannonade, of which the oldest and most experienced soldiers in the army had never witnessed a parallel for magnificence and effect, and the results of which exceeded the most sanguine expectations of those who had advocated the movement. Notwithstanding the rapidity with which the Sikhs fired, it was

Digitized by Google

manifest that neither human fortitude, nor the best materials could withstand the storm which for two hours and a half beat on their devoted artillery. Many of their guns were dismounted, and before a single musket had been discharged, the fire of their formidable line had slackened. The British infantry then deployed, and commenced a steady advance, supported by their field batteries. Right in the path of Sir Walter Gilbert's division lay the larger village, the key of the Sikh position, flanked by two batteries, and crowded with Sikh soldiers. The brigade, which under Brigadier Godby had played so conspicuous a part at Chillianwalla, now under General Penny, rushed among the houses with resistless energy. The enemy fought with desperation, seizing the soldiers' bayonets with the left hand, while they dealt sabre cuts with the right; but they were eventually overpowered. The smaller village was carried chiefly through the gallantry of Colonel Franks, and the ardent courage of his brave 10th. When the villages were won, which was not effected without serious loss to the assailants, the whole Sikh line gave way, and was pursued round the town by the four divisions of infantry. Later in the day a body of the splendid Sikh horse, together with 1,500 Afghan cavalry under Akram Khan, the son of Dost Mahomed, advanced against the flank and rear of General Thackwell, in command of the cavalry, who put in array against them that regiment of Sinde horse which had been disciplined under the eye of Sir Charles Napier, and had long and ably contributed to the defence of the province. It was now under the command of Captain Malcolm, and, with the aid of the 9th Lancers, bore back with a noble ardour, the Afghan and Sikh horse. While the Sikh army was thus pursued by the infantry battalions, the cavalry, which had been restrained at first, was let loose. Onward they rushed, dispersing, riding over, and trampling down in their resistless career, the flying and scattered infantry of the Sikhs, capturing guns and waggons, and converting the discomfited enemy into a shapeless mass of fugitives. It was not till half-

Digitized by Google

past four, when they had advanced fifteen miles beyond Guzerat, that they drew rein, by which time the army of Shere Sing was a wreck, deprived of its camp, its standards, and fifty-three pieces of cannon.

Remarks on the battle, 1849.

Among the noblest achievements of our Indian generals, the battle of Guzerat stands out in bold relief, not only in reference to the magnitude of the forces engaged, and the confidence with which previous events had inspired the enemy, but, also, to the importance of its result, the utter extinction of the formidable power and spirit of Runjeet Sing's great armament, terrific in the death throes of its expiring wrath. Throughout this campaign the Sikhs fought better than in the campaign of the Sutlege. Their cavalry had greatly improved in daring and combination, and an inferior artillery was as rapidly and effectually served. In the former struggle, their leaders were intriguing with the British authorities, and all but traitors to the national cause; in the second war, they were all in earnest in setting their lives and fortunes on the cast of the die. The battle of Guzerat, of which the occult history has not yet appeared in print, was won by the judicious use of the arm in which the British army had a preponderating power, and has justly been described as the "battle of the guns." The stress of the action fell on the two brigades which assaulted the villages; the other portion of the force had no struggle to maintain, and one brigade neither fired a shot nor lost a man. The cavalry had only one exploit to record, the daring charge of the Sinde horse.

Pursuit of the enemy, 1849.

Sir Joseph Thackwell and his cavalry bivouacked for the night on the ground he occupied, proposing to renew the pursuit the next morning, but he was recalled to the camp, and the enemy was thus enabled to escape across the Jhelum with impunity. Lord Dalhousie had declared that the war must be prosecuted to the entire defeat and dispersion of all who were in arms against us. One column under Sir Colin Campbell was, therefore, sent to sweep the districts in the north, while Sir Walter Gilbert, the first rider in India,

Digitized by Google

whom Sir Henry Lawrence had particularly recommended to Lord Dalhousie to lead the chase, left the camp the day after the battle with infantry, cavalry, horse artillery, and light field guns, in all about 12,000 men. He pursued the relic of the Sikh army, now reduced to about 16,000, along the great high road of the Indus with such rapidity as to give them no breathing time, and to allow his own men little leisure for cooking. Major Lawrence, who had been permitted to proceed to Lahore on parole, before the battle of Guzerat, returned to the Sikh camp after the victory, where he was received with shouts of admiration of his good faith, and was requested by Shere Sing to negotiate the best terms he could obtain from the British commander. He passed repeatedly between the two camps, but the pursuit was continued without intermission. On the 6th March, the Sikh chiefs restored all their prisoners, and two days after entered into terms with General Gilbert. On the 12th, Shere Sing and Chutter Sing delivered up their swords to him at the celebrated monument of Manikylah, once considered a trophy of Alexander the Great. Thirty-five subordinate chiefs laid down their swords at his feet, and the Khalsa soldiers advanced one by one, and, after clasping their arms for the last time, cast them on the growing pile, with a heavy sigh. Forty-one pieces of artillery were also surrendered, which, with those captured at Mooltan and Guzerat, raised the number to one hundred and sixty, the greater portion of which had been buried after the battle of Sobraon, to be disinterred for a future struggle. It remained only to dispose of the Afghans, and the veteran Gilbert, with the speed and buoyancy of youth, followed on their track, crossed the Indus on a bridge of boats which he was just in time to save, and pursued them in their ignominious flight up to the portals of their barrier range; and, as the natives of India sarcastically remarked, "those who rode down the hills like lions, ran back into them like dogs."

Result of the war —Incorporation. The battle of Guzerat decided the fate of the Punjab, and finally quenched the hopes of the

Digitized by Google

Khalsa. It was no ordinary distinction for that noble army to have met the conquerors of India at Moodkee, at Ferozeshuhur, at Alliwal, at Sobraon, at Chillianwalla, and at Guzerat, with indomitable courage, and on more than one occasion to have shaken their throne. But, after six such conflicts, they resigned themselves with a feeling of proud humility to the supremacy of the power which had exhibited military qualifications superior to their own. The Punjab was now by the indefeasible right of conquest at the disposal of the British Government. Such a consummation had not been expected in England, and Lord Dalhousie was not in possession of the views of the Court of Directors regarding the disposal of it; but he wisely adopted the vigorous policy of annexing the dominions of Runjeet Sing, on both sides the Indus, to the Company's territories. In communicating this resolution to the India House, he alluded to the sanction which had been given to the annexation of two districts after the last unprovoked war, and he expressed his confidence that the absorption of the remainder of the country, after the unprovoked aggression which had entailed a second war, would be equally approved of. In a brief and forcible proclamation, issued on the 29th March, 1849, he stated that after the death of Runjeet Sing, the Sirdars and the Khalsa army had, without cause or provocation, suddenly invaded the British territory; that their troops had been again and again defeated; that the Maharaja Duleep Sing had tendered his submission to the Governor-General at the gates of Lahore, and solicited his clemency; that the Governor-General had generously spared the kingdom which he had a just right to confiscate, placed the Maharaja on the throne, and concluded a treaty of friendship between the two states. The British Government had scrupulously observed every stipulation contained in it, while the Sikhs had grossly violated the promises by which they were bound. The army of the Lahore state and the whole Sikh people, joined by many of the Sirdars who had signed the treaty, had risen against us and waged a fierce and

Digitized by Google

bloody war for the proclaimed purpose of destroying the British and their power. The Government of India had no desire for conquest, but was bound in duty to provide fully for its own security and for the interests of those committed to its charge, and, as the only sure mode of protecting itself from the perpetual recurrence of unprovoked and wasting wars, was compelled to resolve on the entire subjugation of a people whom their own government had long been unable to control, whom no punishment could deter from violence, and no acts of friendship could conciliate to peace. He, therefore, proclaimed that the kingdom of the Punjab was at an end, and that all the territories of the Maharaja Duleep Sing should henceforth be a portion of the British empire in India. To offer any vindication of a measure which even the most prejudiced of Lord Dalhousie's opponents have not ventured to impugn, would be altogether redundant. The Punjab was the last province within the boundaries of India, which fell to us by the arbitrament of war, and our title to it stands upon the same basis of right as our first acquisitions of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, by the same issue, a century before.

End of the Punjab kingdom—honours, 1849.

On the 29th March, the young Maharaja took his seat for the last time on the throne of Runjeet Sing, and in the presence of Sir Henry Lawrence, the Resident, and Mr. Elliott, the foreign secretary, and the nobles of his court, heard Lord Dalhousie's proclamation read in English, Persian, and Hindostanee, and then affixed the initials of his name in English characters to the document which transferred the kingdom of the five rivers to the Company, and secured to him an annuity of five lacs of rupees a-year. The British colours were then hoisted upon the ramparts, and a royal salute announced the fulfilment of Runjeet's prediction that the Punjab also would "become red." The Koh-i-noor, which he had destined to the great idol of Orissa, was set apart for the crown of England. The jageers of the leaders of the rebellion were confiscated, and they retired to their native villages on small stipends. Moolraj

Digitized by Google

was brought to trial before a special court, composed of three European officers, as an accessory to the murder of Mr. Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson, and found guilty, but recommended to mercy in consideration of extenuating circumstances discovered in the course of the inquiry; he was sentenced to imprisonment for life, but died within a short time. Lord Dalhousie was elevated to the dignity of a Marquis, the fourth marquisate bestowed on the Governors-General, who had repudiated the "beautiful theory" of Mr. Dundas, and added provinces to the Company's dominions. The reproach of Chillianwalla was forgotten in the triumph of Guzerat, and Lord Gough also obtained a step in the peerage. Generals Gilbert and Thackwell were rewarded with the Grand Cross of the Bath, and Generals Campbell, Wheeler, and Cheape with Knight-Commanderships ; but Brigadier Tennant, who had commanded and worked the artillery which won the field of Guzerat, was passed over,, and received only an inferior reward, which reflected discredit on those alone who had withheld the recommendation of his claims. Lieutenant Edwardes obtained a brevet-majority, and Lieutenants Lake, Taylor, and Herbert were duly rewarded for deeds of no ordinary merit, but the gallant Abbott, who had defended the fortress of Nara against fearful odds, down to the close of the campaign, was invidiously refused the honour due to his distinguished efforts and success.

Close of the period of war, 1849.

The battle of Guzerat closed the period of war, which began with the expedition to Afghanistan in 1838, and continued with little intermission for more than ten years. During this decade the three independent armies of Sinde, Gwalior, and Lahore, numbering more than 120,000 brave soldiers, were broken up, and their formidable artillery, consisting of more than 600 pieces of cannon, the object of their adoration as the tutelary guardians of their strength, was transferred to our own arsenals. The importance of these events was not fully perceived till the arrival of the time, a few years later, when the whole of the Bengal

Digitized by Google

army rose in mutiny and wrested the north-west provinces from our authority. If, at that critical period, these military organizations had existed in full vigour, ready to take advantage of the shock our power had received, we should in all probability, have had the whole continent to reconquer. By the incorporation of the Punjab, the Company's dominions were expanded from Cape Comorin to the Khyber, distant from each other more than two thousand miles. Within this range there still remained more than a hundred and fifty native principalities, of greater or less extent, but they occupied only a subordinate position, and not a shot could be fired on the continent of India without the permission of the Governor-General. The establishment of our permanent authority throughout India, which was affirmed at the beginning of the century by Lord Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington—then General Wellesley—to be the only means by which the peace and tranquillity of the country could be secured, was now consummated. The erection of this magnificent empire, reckoning from the battle of Plassy to the battle of Guzerat, was the work of little less than a century. At every successive stage of its progress it was reprobated as an atrocious crime by one party in England, while another party saw in it only the inevitable result of the contact of civilization with comparative barbarism. To the hundred and twenty millions of people whose interests were affected by it, it was an inestimable blessing, and it was dolorous only to the princes whom it deprived of the power of oppressing their subjects. It was invariably honoured with the thanks of Parliament, and it was rewarded by the Crown with seven new peerages, and eight steps in the peerage.

Government of the Punjab, 1849—54.

The fortune of war had thus thrown upon the Government of India the task of administering a new kingdom, comprising 50,000 square miles and containing a population of four millions, of which one million consisted of Sikhs. It was a fortunate circumstance for the Punjab that at this juncture the supreme power in India was

Digitized by Google

lodged in the hands of one who combined great resolution and untiring industry with an extraordinary governing faculty. For the full exercise of that faculty the country of the five rivers afforded an ample field. It was not encumbered with any of the decrepit institutions of the older provinces. There was nothing to demolish, and everything to create. A favourable opportunity was presented of constructing an administration exempt from previous errors, and embodying the experience of half a century. Contrary to his general principle, Lord Dalhousie tried the experiment—which soon failed—of committing the management to a Board consisting of three, who were entrusted with supreme authority in all matters, civil, fiscal, and criminal, even to the power of life and death, as well as with the superintendence of every moral and material improvement. At the head of the Board was Sir Henry Lawrence, one of the great men of the Company's service, and a fit successor of Ochterlony, Munro, and Metcalfe. His name was one of auspicious omen in the Punjab, where, in popular opinion, the rebellion arose on his departure, and was quelled on his return. His only failing, and in a conqueror it was more than half a virtue, was an excess of sympathy with the feelings and prejudices of the native aristocracy, which it was not always easy to reconcile with the general interests of the community. With him were associated his brother, Mr. John Lawrence, now Governor-General of India, and Mr. Mansel, who speedily gave place to Mr.—now Sir Robert—Montgomery. A more efficient Board it would have been impossible to construct, even in India. The subordinate administration was entrusted to fifty-six covenanted officers, one half of the civil and the other of the military branch, who filled the offices of Commissioners, and Deputy and Assistant Commissioners. They were the flower of the service; men of mature talent, or youths of noble aspirations for an honourable career, and there was no little truth in the remark that the other provinces of India had been robbed of administrative skill to enrich the Punjab. The system of govern-

Digitized by Google

ment was admirably adapted, by its simplicity and vigour, to the wants of a country where, under the Sikh ruler, the only officers of state had been soldiers or tax-gatherers, and the only punishment, fine or mutilation, and where no civil court existed but at the capital. For the voluminous regulations which sat like an incubus on the older provinces, a clear and concise manual suited to the habits of a people who respected justice but dreaded law, was compiled by Mr. Montgomery and comprised in a few sheets of foolscap.

The border; disarmament; the Police. 1849—54.

The conquest of the Punjab removed the boundary of the empire from the Sutlege to the mountain ranges beyond the Indus which formed a radius of many hundred miles. They were inhabited by various tribes of highlanders whose vocation, from time immemorial, had been war and plunder, and who had kept the Mogul emperors in a fever of anxiety even after they were masters of all India. The inhabitants were able to bring down 100,000 bold, brave, and lawless men at arms upon the plains, and Lord Dalhousie considered it his primary duty to protect the frontier from their inroads. A series of fortifications was established along the whole line, provisioned and provided with the munitions of war for three months, and connected with each other by a line of roads. An especial force, consisting of five regiments of infantry and four of cavalry, and composed of all classes, was organized for the protection of the marches. For the security of the Government and the safety of the people, Lord Dalhousie resolved to disarm the Punjab; within six months of its annexation an edict was issued to every town and village between the Beeas and the Indus to surrender all arms, and the manufacture, sale, or possession of them in future was prohibited. The weapons thus given up amounted to 120,000 and presented every variety of form and character, many of them being of very costly material and curious workmanship. Permission was however, granted to the inhabitants of Peshawur and to the districts bordering on the robber clans beyond the Indus, as

Digitized by Google

well as to the people of Hazara, living on the left bank of the river among marauding tribes who had never been subdued by Greek, Mahomedan, or Sikh, to carry arms for their own defence. The effect of this disarmament was speedily visible in the diminution of crimes of violence. The police force was partly civil and partly military. The latter, which furnished guards for treasuries and jails, and orderlies for the civil functionaries, and patrolled the roads, consisted of six regiments of foot, and twenty-seven troops of horse, in number about 7,000. A detective police was likewise introduced. The ancient institution of the village watch was revived and placed on an efficient footing. The watchmen were selected from the community; they were paid by the people, and acted under the salutary influence of the village elders, and the control of the native collectors, as well as of the European magistrates. By these admirable arrangements the Board were enabled within three years to report that no portion of India enjoyed greater peace and security than the Punjab.

The Revenue, 1849—54.

The vital question of the land assessment, on which the happiness, and, to a great extent, the loyalty of the people in the East depends, was dealt with in a spirit of great liberality, and the blunders which had marred the system introduced into the older provinces, were carefully avoided. The settlement was not formed till after a minute and detailed investigation, corresponding with that which Mr. Robert Bird had carried out in the north-west provinces. The land tax which Runjeet Sing had fixed at about one-half the produce, was reduced, on an average, by one-fourth, and leases were granted, at first for short periods, but eventually for ten, and in some cases, for thirty years. The security of the tenure, and the moderation of the state demand, gave no small encouragement to cultivation; of the Khalsa soldiery, more than 30,000 exchanged the sword for the plough, and these circumstances, combined with favourable seasons, gave such exuberant harvests as to reduce the price of grain. The agriculturists, who were required to pay their rents in coin

Digitized by Google

and not in kind, began to exhibit feelings of discontent, and the Chief Commissioner lost no time in proceeding through every district with his financial assistants, minutely examining every cause of complaint on the spot, after which a further reduction of rent was made to the extent of ten per cent. Lord Dalhousie was anxious to avoid the boundless irritation which had arisen in the Gangetic provinces from dallying with the subject of rent-free tenures, and, under his directions, the Board took up the question with promptitude and earnestness. Every case was assiduously examined with a sincere desire to do justice to the interests, both of individuals and of the state, and a satisfactory adjustment was speedily concluded. The duties on the transit of goods and merchandize from district to district and from town to town had been contrived with great ingenuity by the financiers of Runjeet Sing, and the country was covered with a network of custom houses which stifled commercial enterprise. Within nine months of the incorporation of the province they were entirely swept away, and the trade of the Punjab and of Central Asia was allowed to flow free and unfettered in every direction. The loss of revenue which this liberal policy entailed was more than compensated by the scientific imposition of new taxes, four of which were found to yield as much as forty-eight of the clumsy taxes of the Khalsa government, and with less vexation and inconvenience to the people.

Slavery; dacoity; thuggee, 1849—54.

The Board of Administration likewise directed their attention with eminent success to the extinction of domestic slavery; the sale of children, which had been openly practised under the old Government, was prohibited, and the market ceased to be supplied by kidnappers. With equal vigour the Board assailed the system of dacoity which was in full vigour, notwithstanding the summary proceedings of Sikh despotism. But the fact was, that while Runjeet Sing seized upon entire provinces, his chiefs, with whose proceedings he rarely interfered while they paid their revenue and maintained their contingents,

Digitized by Google

were permitted to attack and plunder villages with perfect impunity. Armed bodies of Sikh outlaws, moreover, rendered the roads unsafe for travellers. With that energy for which there is always a larger scope in the non-regulation than in the regulation provinces, the Commissioners took the field against these criminals, inflicted prompt and condign punishment on all those who were captured, and hunted the rest out of the country, with such earnestness that before the Punjab had been five years in our possession, it was more free from the crime of dacoity than Bengal, after it had been eighty years under our management. It was likewise found that the practice of thuggee, from which the efforts of Colonel Sleeman had relieved Hindostan, had found its way into the Punjab, and was still practised. Runjeet Sing executed the man who introduced it, and Shere Sing hung or mutilated every one convicted of it. The increasing disorders of the state, however, and the weakness of the Government gave fresh courage to the thugs, and murders were often perpetrated without any effort to conceal them. The task of eradicating the crime was committed to Mr. Brereton, of the civil service, and he entered upon his duties with all that animation which commonly distinguished the proceedings of the Punjab officials. The cases of assassination which were fully substantiated amounted to 1,300. A roll of the thugs, whose names and residences had been furnished by approvers, was sent to each station; no less than 550 men arrested, the greater number of whom were executed; the gangs were broken up and the practice disappeared.

Infanticide, 1849—54.

Another crime with which it was the mission of the British Government in the Punjab to deal was infanticide, and the vigour of Lord Dalhousie and of the Board was rewarded with more decisive success than had attended the efforts of Government for thirty years in Hindostan. It was most prevalent among the proud and wealthy Bedees, the descendants of the first Sikh prophet, Nanuk. Occupying, as they did, the highest rank in society, they disdained to bestow

Digitized by Google

their daughters in an unequal alliance; to allow them to remain unmarried was an indelible disgrace; the female infant was therefore consigned to death at the dawn of her existence. Other castes, not excepting even the Mahomedans, had been led to adopt this inhuman custom, in consequence, chiefly, of the insupportable expense of weddings. As soon as the existence of the practice was ascertained, Lord Dalhousie determined to bring the whole weight of Government, by menaces and promises, to bear upon its suppression. He felt that coercion would only tend to defeat its own object, and that to ensure success, it was necessary to obtain the concurrence of the nation. The first step towards the eradication of the crime was justly considered to be a reduction of the cost of weddings. It was swelled, as in Rajpootana, by the clamorous demands of the *bhats* and minstrels, who flocked to them like vultures attracted by the smell of carrion; and it was at once determined to deal with them as vagrants. A large durbar was then convened at Umritsir, at the most popular festival in the Sikh calendar. It was attended by all the aristocracy and hierarchy of the Punjab, by the hill chiefs, by the Mahomedan nobles, by wealthy merchants, and by learned pundits. It was the most august conclave, and for the noblest object, which had ever been held in that holy city, or indeed, in any part of India. The British officers in the Punjab repaired to it almost without exception, and met delegates from every tribe and class. Under a spacious awning erected for the occasion, the Chief Commissioner addressed this large assembly, and entered upon a calm and temperate discussion of the subject. He urged the enormity of the practice, which they readily admitted; he dwelt on the anxiety of the Governor-General to suppress it, and he pointed out the means by which, in the opinion of the British Government, that object could be most effectually secured. All the assembled chiefs, Hindoo, Mahomedan, Rajpoot, and Sikh, entered into a solemn covenant to abide by the propositions of Lord Dalhousie and the Chief Commissioner. Committees were appointed to establish

Digitized by Google

a scale for the expense of weddings; the sumptuary rules which they drew up were universally accepted and ratified, and one of the principal motives for the murder of infants was removed. Other meetings were held in the chief towns and villages, with the same happy result. The most important aid in this noble cause was rendered by Raja Golab Sing, the ruler of Cashmere, who directed all his nobles and chiefs to meet the Commissioner, and to adopt his proposals regarding the retrenchment of wedding expenses, and he set the example by remitting the tax which native rulers had always levied on them.

Roads and Canals, 1849—1854.

The Romans considered the subjugation of no country complete until it was pierced with highways. In like manner, Lord Dalhousie did not consider the conquest of the Punjab fully accomplished till it was intersected with military roads. Of these works, the most important was that which united Peshawur with Lahore, and which extended over 275 miles. It presented the most formidable difficulties to the engineer. It passed over more than 100 great bridges, and 450 of smaller dimensions; it penetrated six mountain chains, and was carried by means of embankments over the marshes of two great rivers; but every obstacle was overcome by Colonel—now Sir Robert—Napier, to whose skill and energy the Punjab was indebted for all those great material improvements which gave it the appearance of a Roman province. Other military roads were constructed to connect the most important towns and strategical positions with each other, and to facilitate the transport of troops and munitions of war. Roads were likewise laid down as highways of commerce, both domestic and foreign. These great works were happily placed under the direction and the responsibility of a single energetic officer, and in the course of five years the Board were able to report to the Governor-General that the length of road completed, and under construction, amounted to no less than 2,200 miles. The importance of irrigation in developing the agricultural resources of the country had not been overlooked by the former rulers of the Punjab.

Digitized by Google

There were few districts which did not exhibit tokens of their labours in the construction of canals and waterworks, some of which were still in existence, while others were extinct. The canals of Mooltan, which contributed to the fertility of the province, had been greatly improved by Sawun Mull. The Hulsi canal, constructed under the orders of Shah Jehan, was a work of imperial luxury, designed to convey the waters of the Ravee over more than a hundred miles to the fountains and conservatories of his palace at Lahore. Lord Dalhousie, who considered that "of all works of public improvement which could be applied to an Indian province, works of irrigation were the happiest in their effects on the physical condition of the people," directed all these canals to be repaired. No rate was levied for the water, as the state was considered to be repaid by the increase of cultivation. In some cases, the example of Runjeet Sing was followed, and advances were made for repairing or improving them to the zemindars, who regarded the debt as a debt of honour, and refunded it with strict punctuality. The greatest work of irrigation constructed under the auspices of Lord Dalhousie and the directions of Colonel Napier, was the canal of the Baree dooab, the populous district lying between the Ravee and the Chenab. It tapped the Ravee as it issued from the mountains, and after a course of 247 miles, delivered its waters again to that stream a little above Mooltan. Three branches conveyed a supply of water to Kussoor, Lahore, and Sobraon. This magnificent undertaking, which, with its branches, extended to the length of 465 miles, was equal, if not superior to the noblest canals in Europe, and formed the worthiest monument of British supremacy in the Punjab.

Result of these Measures, 1854.

The Government established in the Punjab was emphatically Lord Dalhousie's own creation. Rarely has a greater amount of administrative and executive talent been brought to bear upon the improvement of an Indian province, but it was his genius which animated the whole system. He was in constant and direct communication with the

Digitized by Google

chief authorities, and, by the aid of his counsel and the influence of his position, enabled them to prosecute their labours without embarrassment or delay. Few Governors have ever seen so much of their dominions as Lord Dalhousie saw of the Punjab. From east to west, from north to south, he crossed its rivers, rode over its plains, and threaded its defiles. During this personal inspection, no evil remained without a remedy, no want was unsupplied. Nothing was too minute for his attention; he did not overlook even the conservation of the grass preserves for the cavalry, or the protection of the remaining forests, or the planting of trees on every road and watercourse, or the establishment of nurseries, or the introduction of ninety varieties of exotic plants. The Christian character of the administration of the Lawrences was ever one of its most distinguishing features. Innovations and improvements foreign to the traditions and the prejudices of the chieftains, the priesthood, and the people, were introduced with a bolder hand than the public authorities had ventured to use at the other Presidencies, and in the course of seven years the Punjab presented a more Anglicized cast of government than the north-west provinces. The administration embodied the maturity of our experience in the science of oriental government, and rendered the Punjab the model province of India. It was the greatest triumph achieved under the Company's rule, and did honour to European civilization. By these wise and beneficent measures, the nation which had recently been the great source of political anxiety, became one of the chief elements of our imperial strength. The brave soldiers who had shaken our power at Ferozeshuhur and Chillianwalla, enlisted under our banners, assisted in reconquering Delhi from the rebel sepoys and in restoring our sovereignty, marched up the Irawaddy to fight the Burmese, and, to crown the romance of their history, aided in planting the British colours on the battlements of Pekin.

Second Burmese War, 1852.

There was peace for three years after the conquest of the Punjab, and then came the unex-

Digitized by Google

pected and unwelcome Burmese war. The treaty of Yandaboo, concluded with the King of Burmah in 1826, stipulated for the residence of a British representative at his court, and the commercial treaty of Mr. Crawfurd at the close of that year, provided that the Governments of both countries should give "the utmost protection and security to merchants." Colonel Benson and Colonel Burney were sent in succession as Residents to Ava, but they were treated with great contempt. One of them was denied the means of obtaining provisions, and directed to take up his residence on an island in the Irawaddy, which was inundated on the rise of the river, and he was constrained to retire from the country. The British traders at Rangoon were subject to perpetual extortion. In 1851, the master of a vessel was seized, on his arrival at Rangoon, and placed in confinement on the false accusation of having murdered his pilot, who had run the ship ashore, and then jumped overboard. The charge was dismissed as frivolous, but he was nevertheless subjected to a fine. Another commander, thirty days after reaching the port, was charged by a deserter with having put to death one of the crew, who had died at sea. The case was investigated by the Burmese authorities, and the captain acquitted on the unanimous testimony of the ship's company, but he did not escape without a fine, and the detention of his vessel. On the 27th September, the European merchants at Rangoon transmitted a memorial to the Government of India, in which various cases of oppression were enumerated. They asserted that those who refused payment were subjected to torture, that robberies and false charges were of daily occurrence, and that unless protection could be obtained, they must quit the country and sacrifice their property. On the receipt of these representations, the Supreme Council came to the conclusion that British subjects had a right to expect that they should be protected by their own Government from such injustice, oppression, and extortion.

Deputation of

The absence of any accredited British agent at

Digitized by Google

Commodore Lambert, 1851.

the court or in the territories of Ava, rendered it difficult to deal with the case; but the difficulty was diminished by the arrival of Commodore Lambert, in H.M. ship "Fox," and it was resolved to send him to Rangoon with a communication from the Government of India. Lord Dalhousie has been censured for despatching a naval officer on a mission of peace, but it was considered, and with great reason, that in dealing with a Government like that of Burmah, unrivalled in Asia for conceit and arrogance, nothing was more likely to secure attention and to avoid an eventual conflict, than the appearance in Burmese waters of an envoy in command of a vessel of war,—"one of Cromwell's ambassadors which spoke all languages, and never took a refusal." The instructions of the Commodore were limited to the investigation of the complaints of the merchants, and to the demand of adequate pecuniary compensation, if they were substantiated. If this reasonable request was refused, he was directed to transmit the letter which the President of the Council of India had addressed to the king and entrusted to him. In that communication the two cases of "gross and unjustifiable ill-treatment of British subjects by his Majesty's servants" were enumerated, "in the full conviction that he would at once condemn their conduct, order compensation to the parties aggrieved, and recognize the wisdom of removing the Governor of Rangoon. If these just expectations should be disappointed, the Government of India would feel itself called on to take such immediate steps as should protect the interests of its subjects and vindicate its own honour and power." The Commodore anchored off Rangoon on the 26th November, and the Governor immediately threatened with death any who should venture to communicate with him. Some of the Europeans at length succeeded in escaping to the frigate, and submitted to the Commodore a long roll of injuries they had sustained. On perusing it, he concluded that it would be more proper to seek redress from the sovereign than from his subordinate, and transmitted the President's letter to Ava,

Digitized by Google

through the Deputy Governor, who had come on board. It was accompanied with one from himself to the ministers, in which he stated that he should await a reply for five weeks. It was delivered to him on the 1st January, 1852: "The great ministers of state, bearing continually on their heads the two golden feet, resembling the germs of the lotus, of his most glorious and excellent Majesty," complained of the purport and style of the letter, as "not being in accordance with friendship." They promised, however, that the offending Governor should be displaced, and, "in regard to the merchants who have been unjustifiably insulted and ill-treated, that proper and strict inquiry should be instituted, and in accordance with custom it should be decided." The communication appeared to be so friendly and pacific as to lead the Commodore to congratulate the Government of India on the prospect of an early and satisfactory settlement; but he was speedily undeceived. The real intentions of an oriental court are to be gathered, not from glozing despatches, but from the conduct of its officers, and on this occasion they were altogether unfriendly. The old Governor quitted Rangoon, not in disgrace, but in triumph, and with ostentatious parade. His successor did not condescend to notice the British representative, who was obliged to open a communication, and request him to appoint a day to receive a deputation. The Governor replied that any day would suit his convenience. On the morning of the 6th January, Captain Latter, the interpreter of the mission, sent a messenger to him to announce that the officers would arrive at noon, with an official communication. At the appointed time, Captain Fishbourne and other officers, including Mr. Kincaid, proceeded on the ponies they had been able to procure to Government House, but found great difficulty in making their way through the crowd to the courtyard. No officer came forward to receive them, nor were they permitted to enter the house, but were detained in the sun by the menials, who affirmed that the Governor was asleep and must not be disturbed, whereas

Captain Fishbourne insulted, 1852.

Digitized by Google

he was all the while gazing at them from the window, and enjoying their mortification, while exposed to the jeers and insults of the mob. The patience of Captain Fishbourne was at length exhausted, and he returned to the frigate to report the treatment he had received.

Proceedings of Commodore Lambert, 1852.

Commodore Lambert had been instructed by the Government of India, in case the communication from Ava was not satisfactory, to blockade the ports. He considered that the deliberate insult inflicted on the officers who were sent on a diplomatic commission to the Governor expressly appointed by the Court to adjust all differences, was equivalent to an unfavourable reply from the king, and, in conformity with the tenor of his instructions, declared the Burmese ports in a state of blockade. He likewise took possession of a ship lying in the river, which the king had built for trade, and resolved to retain it till the claims of the merchants were satisfied. The Governor of Dalla, who had always been friendly to the British, visited the frigate the day after, on a conciliatory mission, when the Commodore informed him that in addition to the compensation to the merchants, which had been fixed at 10,000 rupees, it was necessary for the Governor of Rangoon to come on board the "Fox," and express his regret for the indignity offered to the gentlemen of the deputation, after which he would restore the king's ship and honour the Burmese flag with a royal salute. The Governor refused to comply with this requisition, but gave the Commodore to understand that any attempt to remove the royal vessel would be resisted. The Commodore then proceeded down the river to establish the blockade at the mouth of it, with the Government vessel in tow, when a heavy fire was opened from the stockades below Rangoon, on both sides the river, which the guns of the "Fox" demolished in a few moments. Instead of offering the apology which the Commodore required, the Governor of Rangoon addressed a letter to the Government of India in reference to these transactions, in which he stated that four subordinate officers, who had been

Digitized by Google

drinking, came riding into his courtyard with the American missionary Kincaid; that he himself was asleep at the time; and that the officers on their return made a false report to the Commodore, who "unlike a man of the world, carried off the great ship belonging to the all powerful lord of the universe and the master of all white elephants." In his reply to this communication, the President in Council repeated the demands which the Commodore had made, and engaged, after they were complied with, to depute an officer of rank to conclude a final settlement. The Governor rejoined that the officer of rank must be sent in the first instance, before he would attend to any further communications.

Lord Dalhousie's proceedings, 1852.

During these transactions, Lord Dalhousie was in the north-west provinces, and, apprehending from the aspect of circumstances, that the Government was drifting into a war, hastened down in the most uncomfortable of vehicles, with only a single servant, and reached Calcutta on the 29th January, intent on preventing hostilities. Those who were in communication with him at the time will bear testimony to the fact, that, so far was the annexation of Pegu from being a foregone conclusion before he reached Calcutta, that no Governor-General ever manifested a greater or more sincere repugnance to a war than Lord Dalhousie did on this occasion. It has again been surmised that he took possession of that province to prevent its falling into the hands of the French or the Americans, and it may be instructive to dispel this misconception by tracing it to its source. The United States frigate, "Susquehana," happened at this time to be in the Hoogly, and it was reported that the Washington Government contemplated the establishment of a consulate at Rangoon for the protection of American subjects, not excluding missionaries, inasmuch as both the French and the American Governments, unlike the English, consider their missionary subjects as much entitled to protection as their commercial agents. One of the leading journals in Bengal, thinking the Government of India dilatory in attending to the memorial of

Digitized by Google

grievances, remarked that "if John Bull was so slow to redress them, we must invoke the aid of brother Jonathan, and send the 'Susquehana' to Rangoon." But it was not until the third application for redress had been rejected by the Burmese authorities, that Lord Dalhousie came to the conclusion that no alternative was now left to the Government of India but to seek reparation by force of arms. On the 12th February, he recorded his views in a Minute, in which, after a summary statement of previous transactions, he affirmed that to send an envoy of rank, as the Governor requested, to supersede the officers who had been employed in the negotiations, would be to admit the offensive accusations made against them, and that the British Government having thus relinquished the demands it had peremptorily advanced, and abandoned the officers it was bound to uphold, would unquestionably be regarded by the Burmese nation, as well as by every eastern people, as having submitted to humiliation and avowed defeat. "The Government of India cannot," he said, "consistently with its own safety, appear for one day in an attitude of inferiority, or hope to maintain peace and submission among the numberless princes and people embraced within the vast circuit of the empire, if, for one day, it give countenance to a doubt of the absolute superiority of its arms, and of its continued resolution to maintain it." At the same time, he addressed a letter to the king reciting the oppression of British subjects, the demand for compensation, the insult offered to the deputation, and the refusal of any apology, and stating that large preparations were now in progress to enforce the rights and vindicate the power of the British Government, but that the king might yet avert hostilities by acceding to the former demands, and paying down, by the 1st of April, ten lacs of rupees as a compensation for the expenses incurred in preparations.

Efforts of Lord Dalhousie, 1852.

Finding a war all but inevitable, Lord Dalhousie threw his whole soul into the work, and never since the time, sixty years before, when Lord Wellesley brought five armies into the field with matchless speed, and in

Digitized by Google

four months crushed the power of Sindia, and of the raja of Nagpore, had such a display of superb energy been witnessed in India. The Commander-in-chief was in Sinde, Lord Dalhousie was obliged to become his own minister of war, and he astonished India by the singular genius he exhibited for military organization. The task before him was one of no ordinary difficulty. It was the 10th February before the preparations for the expedition commenced, and it was of the last importance that Rangoon should be occupied before the end of April, when the rains might be expected to set in, and military operations would become perilous. It was necessary that two expeditions should be despatched, one from Calcutta, and the other from Madras, for the latter of which, steamers were to be brought round from Bombay. Neither the telegraph nor the rail, which annihilate time and distance, were then completed, and the orders were transmitted to both Presidencies by the ordinary mail. At Bombay, the steam flotilla was ready for sea within three days, but the expedition was delayed at Madras. The Governor, Sir Henry Pottinger, who was far more a fortunate than a great man, took offence that his superlative merits in China had been overlooked and that he had not been consulted about the arrangements of the war, and refused to allow a single soldier to embark except under the direct responsibility of the Governor-General. The difficulty was overcome by the resolution of Lord Dalhousie, but the expedition was nevertheless retarded. The 38th Bengal Native Infantry refused to proceed by sea to Burmah with the expedition from Calcutta, when he determined to try the experiment of supplying its place by a regiment of Sikhs. They marched down without hesitation to the port and embarked with their accustomed hilarity. By this expedient, the perplexity which the Government had felt for eighty years through the repugnance of the sepoys to the "black water" was at once and finally removed. The forethought and vigour of Lord Dalhousie left nothing to chance, or to dilatory subordinates. From the day when the preparations for the campaign commenced,

Digitized by Google

he superintended every arrangement himself, and his aides-de-camp were incessantly employed in moving about from place to place to ensure punctuality and efficiency in every department. The Tenasserim provinces were drained of live stock and provisions; bakehouses were erected on the coast to ensure a constant supply of bread, which was to be conveyed with the meat by steamers to the camp. In the first war, the encampment at Rangoon had become a charnel house after the rains had set in; to prevent the recurrence of this mortality, the framework of houses was constructed at Moulmein, under the eye of the Commissioner, Colonel Bogle, and sent with the expedition, to afford the soldiers shelter when the monsoon set in. A convalescent hospital was established at Amherst, on the sea coast, thirty miles below Moulmein, and steamers appointed to convey invalids thither.

Organization of the Force, 1852.

The land forces of the expedition amounted to 5,800 men, and comprised three European regiments. The command was entrusted to General Godwin, who held a command in the former war, but had lost little of his military ardour from age. Steam power had been so greatly multiplied in India since the expedition of 1826, in which only one small vessel of sixty horse power was available, that the Government was enabled to employ nineteen steam-vessels carrying 159 guns, and manned by 2,270 sailors and marines. The Bengal column reached the Rangoon river on the 2nd April, and a flag of truce was sent up by the "Proserpine" steamer to receive the reply of the king to the letter of the Governor-General. At the third stockade in the river a fire was opened on her, and the last hope of a peaceful solution of differences was extinguished. While awaiting the arrival of the Madras column, the Commodore employed his vessels in levelling the stockades on the river, and the General sent an expedition against the town of Martaban, lying opposite the British settlement of Moulmein, which was captured in an hour, with the loss of only seventeen men killed and wounded. On the arrival of the Madras force, the whole of this imposing

Digitized by Google

fleet proceeded up the river, and on the 11th April took up a position in front of Rangoon. A brisk fire was opened simultaneously from the great Pagoda, on one side, and from Dalla on the opposite bank of the river. A party of seamen and marines landed with the Royal Irish at Dalla, and carried all the fortifications. Another detachment proceeded up the river against Kemmendine, where the steamers set the stockade on fire, but the Burmese extinguished the flames eight times, and it was not surrendered without a resolute defence.

Capture of Rangoon, 1852.

The troops landed on the morning of the 12th to proceed against the great Pagoda, which was the citadel, as well as the pride of Rangoon, and which had been fortified with such skill as to create the belief that the Burmese must have obtained the services of a European engineer. General Godwin's force had not proceeded above a mile when a heavy fire was opened on it from a battery concealed in the jungle, and it was found necessary to bring up the twenty-four pound howitzers. The stockade was carried by storm after a brisk cannonade, but not without serious loss from the weapons of the enemy, and still more from the insupportable heat of the weather, which struck down the bravest. The General now found that the Burmese had made no inconsiderable progress in the art of war since the former campaign; they had become bolder in their operations, more skilful in selecting their ground and covering their movements, and did not hesitate to quit their stockades, and assail our flanks ; they had moreover become good shots. His own troops were completely exhausted by fatigue and heat, and he resolved to halt for the day. On the 13th, the troops did not alter their position, but the steamers kept up such a continuous cannonade on the town, that the governor was fain to abandon his palace and cross the river, after which he was no more heard of. At daybreak on the 14th, the whole force was under arms and marched towards the Pagoda. The Burmese, expecting that the General would attack the southern gate, had fortified it with a hundred guns, and collected 10,000 men for its defence,

Digitized by Google

and were confounded when they discovered that he was proceeding to attack their weakest point on the eastern vestibule. The heavy eight-inch howitzers were dragged with incredible labour through the long grass and brushwood into a position opposite the gateway, and opened a terrific fire upon it, to which the Burmese replied with such effect that Captain Latter observed to the General that we were losing ten men for every one which an assault might cost. A storming party, consisting of 800 men drawn from the 80th Foot, the Royal Irish, and the 40th Native Infantry, was immediately formed, and advanced to the attack under his guidance and under the command of Colonel Coote. As they moved towards the gate they were assailed from the three terraces which rose in succession one above another in the Pagoda, by an incessant discharge of missiles of every variety, links of chain, bags of broken metal, bottles of nails, and boxes of hammered bullets. It was defended with extraordinary gallantry by the élite of the Burmese army, styled the "immortals," but nothing could arrest the fiery valour of the British soldiers, who rushed up the broad stairs which led from one platform to another, and planted the British ensign on the gilded dome of the noble Pagoda.

The co-operation of the Peguers, 1852.

The town of Rangoon was entirely deserted by the inhabitants on the arrival of the expedition in 1824, and Sir Archibald Campbell was totally deprived of the resources of the country, and isolated from communication with the inhabitants. On the present occasion, however, no sooner was the Pagoda captured and the Burmese army dispersed, than the people returned to their houses and shops, and resumed their usual occupations. Provisions poured into the town; carpenters from Pegu hastened to offer their services to erect the wooden houses for the troops which the forethought of Lord Dalhousie had provided. The river was crowded with boats and shipping, and Rangoon became a busy mart of commerce. The municipal regulations laid down and rigidly enforced by the General, established order

Digitized by Google

and security to such an extent that the women of the country moved freely through the encampment without fear of insult. The natives of the province of Pegu, who had been severely oppressed by their Burmese conquerors, had flocked to the standard of Sir Archibald Campbell, whom they regarded as a deliverer; but they were cruelly abandoned to their fate at the close of the war, and their adherence to the fortunes of the strangers was visited by their former masters with tortures too revolting to be mentioned. With a lively recollection of those barbarities, and a full appreciation of the blessings which the provinces of Aracan and Tenasserim had enjoyed under British rule, they welcomed the arrival of General Godwin, and it was the one hope of their hearts that they should not again be delivered up to the vengeance of their oppressors, but obtain the inestimable blessing of British protection.

Close of the war, 1853.

Compared with the great battles of the Sutlege and the Punjab, the incidents of the war in Burmah appear tame and uninteresting. On the 17th May, General Godwin and Commodore Lambert captured Bassein, the western port of Burmah, with a trifling loss, though it was garrisoned by 5,000 men. While the force lay at Rangoon the steamers scoured the Irawaddy, and the "Proserpine" proceeded up the river, levelled the various stockades, and seized a large fleet of boats laden with grain. Captain Tarleton soon after started with five steamers for Prome, which was abandoned by the Burmese troops, and, with the aid of the townsmen, he transferred some of the guns to his own vessels, and pitched the remainder into the river. Four days more of easy steaming would have taken him up to Ava, but though the magnificent fleet of steamers had the complete command of the river, General Godwin hesitated to advance to Prome with his limited force, leaving Rangoon open to attack from the Burmese army which was said to be hovering about it. This inactivity was attributed to senility rather than to military discretion, and reprobated by the press. Lord

Digitized by Google

Dalhousie proceeded to Rangoon in September to examine the state of affairs with his own eyes, and to afford counsel and confidence to the General. He fully concurred with him in the conclusion that it would be injudicious to remove the troops from quarters where they enjoyed comparatively good health, and to expose them to the severities of the climate, without absolute necessity, but he advised the earliest practicable movement on Prome. It was captured on the 9th October with the loss of only one man. Towards the end of November a detachment was sent to the relief of Major Hill, who had been left in charge of the town of Pegu on its first capture in June, with 400 men, and was besieged by 6,000 Burmese. With the succour of this garrison all military operations ceased. The object of the expedition was to exact reparation for injuries inflicted on British subjects, not to break up the kingdom. Lord Dalhousie was confident that if the army were pushed on to the capital, the king would abandon it on our approach and retire to the northern portion of his dominions, where he would be inaccessible among the wild tribes of mountaineers, and eight hundred miles of unprofitable territory would thus be thrown on our hands; he determined therefore to remain content with the occupation of Pegu.

Annexation of Pegu, 1852.

The Government had now to consider the course which was to be taken to "confirm the vindication of our power, to obtain reimbursement of the expenses of the war, and to provide a security against its recurrence." Lord Dalhousie recorded a Minute on the subject, in which he stated: "In the earliest stage of the present dispute I avowed my opinion that conquest in Burmah would be a calamity second only to the calamity of war. That opinion remains unchanged. If any adequate alternative for the confiscation of territory could have been found by me, or had been suggested to me, my mind would most readily have adopted it. If conquest is contemplated by me now, it is not as a positive good, but as the least of those evils before me, from which we must necessarily select one. But, after constant and anxious

Digitized by Google

reflection through the months during which hostilities have been in progress, I can discover no escape from the necessity. I have been driven most reluctantly to the conclusion that no measure will adequately meet the object which in my judgment it is absolutely necessary to secure,—the establishment of our superiority now, and its maintenance hereafter,—except the seizure and occupation of a portion of the territories of the Burmah kingdom. In like manner as in 1826 it was felt to be necessary to deprive the Burmese of the provinces of Tenasserim, Aracan, and Assam, so now, for stronger reasons, and with better effect, the occupation of the province of Pegu appears to me to be unavoidably demanded by sound views of general policy." He then proceeded to enumerate the political and commercial advantages which might be expected from the annexation. The Court of Directors concurred with him in thinking that extension of territory was not in itself desirable, and that the annexation even of a province possessing so many advantages as Pegu, was to be looked upon rather in the light of a choice of evils than a positive and unmixed good. "We entirely agree with the Governor-General in his estimate of the important bearing which the occupation of this fine province with reference to its position, its climate, and its adaptation in a commercial and maritime point of view to the interests of this country, may have upon the security and advancement of our Indian empire. We therefore convey to you our authority, under the sanction of the Queen's Government, to consider the permanent occupation of Pegu, and its final annexation to the dominions of Her Majesty as the just and necessary result of those military operations which you have been driven to direct against the Burmese empire." A Proclamation was accordingly issued on the 20th December, declaring that in compensation for the past, and better security for the future, the Governor-General in Council had resolved, and hereby proclaims, that the province of Pegu is now and shall be henceforth a portion of the British territories in the East. Lord Dalhousie likewise drafted a treaty of peace and

Digitized by Google

cession, which was to be conveyed to Ava by General Godwin and Captain Phayre; but before they took their departure, a revolution occurred at the capital, the king was dethroned, and his brother reigned in his stead. By him commissioners were despatched to treat with the British authorities, but they were unable to come to terms. The army was therefore broken up without the conclusion of any treaty, which Lord Dalhousie ceased to regret after he had been assured "that all Burmah would consider it an absurdity to observe a treaty, if it could be disregarded with profit."

Result of the Conquest, 1852-1865.

It has been truly observed that the inhabitants of Pegu annexed themselves to the Company's dominions before Lord Dalhousie determined to incorporate the province. For three quarters of a century they had suffered the extremity of oppression from their Burmese conquerors, and they hailed with rapture the prospect of passing under British rule. Their expectations have not been disappointed. Since the first establishment of the Company's authority in the East, no province has ever exhibited so rapid and extraordinary a development of prosperity. The staple produce of the country is rice, the exportation of which was little known under the Burmese Government, but has been steadily on the increase under our flag; the total exports of this article from British Burmah, including the Aracan and Tenasserim provinces, has reached the sum of two crores and a-half of rupees a-year, of which one half comes back in treasure. Its export and import trade has risen from a very insignificant sum, to the almost incredible amount of nine crores of rupees, or nine millions sterling a-year. Rangoon, the Calcutta of the Irawaddy, which contained only a few thousand inhabitants when Lord Dalhousie visited it in 1852 now numbers 66,000. The old town was the grave of the army in 1824; the new town, laid out by our engineer officers, is one of the most healthful in our Asiatic dominions. The great want of the valley of the Irawaddy was population, which had crumbled away under Burmese oppression. It has been

Digitized by Google

gradually increasing, and the province of Pegu now contains a population little short of a million and a-half, while the fertility of the soil would support ten times that number. The entire population of British Burmah, according to the last census, amounted to two millions and a quarter; and it is a notable fact, that the quantity of British manufactures annually absorbed by it exceeds a crore and a quarter of rupees; one Burmese customer would thus appear to be more valuable to the looms of England than four Bengalees. The system of civil and criminal judicature and of police introduced into the province is exactly adapted to the wants of the people, simple and inexpensive in its character, and prompt and vigorous in its operations. All those improvements, which, though totally unknown in native states, follow as a matter of course on the establishment of British rule—facilities of intercourse by land and water, postal and telegraphic communication, plans of education, sanitary rules and appliances—have been bestowed on the province in profusion, and one-fifth of the revenue is devoted to public works. The people are happy and contented, and have not the least desire for any change in the Government. Indeed, so firmly seated is the British authority in Pegu, that in 1857 it was considered perfectly safe to leave it without European troops, which were withdrawn to quell the mutinies in the older provinces. The revenue has steadily increased without any undue pressure on the people. When Mr. Cobden, soon after the conquest, published a pamphlet to denounce its iniquity, Lord Dalhousie remarked to a friend, "the British nation will one day find that Pegu pays, and the crime of having placed it under British protection will be condoned." Whether the crime has been condoned or not, is a matter of indifference; but Pegu pays, not only the whole of its civil list, which has been fixed with a view to efficiency rather than economy, but the entire expense of its military establishment. The revenues amount to a crore of rupees, the expenditure to about five per cent less. The happiness which the people enjoy under our institutions

Digitized by Google

is paid for by themselves, and the province is no burden on the finances of India. It has been singularly fortunate in having, almost from the commencement of our rule, enjoyed the services of Colonel—now Sir Arthur—Phayre, one of the Company's great administrators. It is to his talent and energy that the province owes the system of administration which forms the basis of its prosperity. Equally free from the hauteur of our national character, and from the pride of place, his intercourse with all classes has been unrestrained and genial. The people have come to regard him with the affectionate reverence which is paid to a parent, and long will his name continue fresh and fragrant in their recollections.

The Santal émeute, 1855.

During the last year of Lord Dalhousie's administration, the peace of Bengal was disturbed by an outbreak of the Santals, the tribes inhabiting the hill ranges of Rajmahl. They were the descendants of those among whom Mr. Cleveland had laboured to introduce the blessings of civilization, seventy years before. At a later period, Mr. Pontet, the magistrate, a man of kindred benevolence, endeavoured with indefatigable zeal to implant habits of agricultural industry among them. These half civilized mountaineers were harassed, like the Coles in 1833, by the processes and the bailiffs of the courts, and by the enforced demands of Bengalee money-lenders who had found their way among the villagers. They suddenly rose in rebellion in the month of July, and armed with pickaxes and poisoned arrows, poured down by thousands on the peaceful plains, spreading desolation in all directions. Every European dwelling within their reach was sacked, and seven Europeans were put to death. Their course was marked by the blaze of villages, and the inhabitants fled before them, as they had done a century earlier from the Mahrattas. Nothing was less to have been expected than such an insurrection in a district where for seventy years the presence of a soldier had been unnecessary. The Government was taken completely by surprise; the rains had set in with their usual violence, and

Digitized by Google

no troops were available except the corps of hill rangers, composed of men of the same tribe. They were driven back by the insurgents, who also derived fresh courage by the slaughter of an officer and twenty sepoys. It was on this occasion that the military utility of the rail was for the first time exhibited, by the conveyance of a body of troops in a few hours, who saved the important station of Raneegunge from pillage, and the surrounding country from devastation. The Governor-General was at Ootacamund, and the Governor of Bengal, Mr. Halliday, was urgent for the proclamation of martial law, but the scruples of the legislative member of Council delayed the passing of the Act till the beginning of November. As the cold season advanced troops were brought up from various directions; the rebels were hemmed in on every side, and hunted through the country with as little tenderness as they had shown to their victims; the cholera likewise made great havoc among them. The rebellion was at length extinguished, and the field force broken up, on the last day of the year. The insurrection was not however without some countervailing advantage. The same boon was conferred on the Santals which had been bestowed on the Coles; the district was converted into a non-regulation province and placed in charge of a Commissioner.

Mutinies in the Punjab, 1849—1850.

Under the military division of Lord Dalhousie's administration, it only remains to notice the acts of insubordination manifested in the Punjab, as in Sinde, from the withdrawal of extra allowances to the native troops, when it became a British province. In July, 1849, the men of the 13th and 22nd Native Infantry refused their curtailed pay at first, but subsequently consented to accept it. Courts-martial were held, and one native officer, and four men of the 13th, and an officer and six men of the 22nd were dismissed the service, while seventeen of the delinquents in both regiments were imprisoned for life. The next case of insubordination occurred in the 41st at Delhi, where, after the order of reduction had been read, the men returned to their lines and

Digitized by Google

piled arms, but refused to take off their accoutrements. The Commander-in-chief happened to be on the spot at the time, and sent to announce to the regiment that insubordination would be punished by dismissal, after which, it marched off to Mooltan, upon the reduced scale of pay. At Wuzeerabad, in the Punjab, the sepoys of the 32nd hesitated to receive their pay; the first four who declined it were seized, tried, sentenced to imprisonment, and marched off in irons in the presence of the brigade, and not a man refused to accept it afterwards. A native officer of this regiment was subsequently brought to a court-martial for having concealed this feeling of insubordination from his superiors, and five men were sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment for having fomented it. Sir Charles Napier ordered their sentence to be revised, when they were condemned to death, but he commuted the punishment to transportation for life. The 66th marched from Lucknow to Govindgur, but the commanding officer, from a feeling of timidity, culpably neglected to explain the retrenchment of pay to the regiment before it started, and contented himself with announcing it to some of the native officers. It was for the first time made known to the men on their arrival at the fort on the 1st February, 1850, when they exhibited symptoms of mutiny. One sepoy endeavoured to close the gate, but he was felled to the ground by a blow from the sword of Lieutenant Macdonald, and a small squadron of cavalry under Colonel Bradford marched in and restored discipline. The men piled arms, and quietly marched out at the command of their Colonel. Their correspondence was seized at the post office, but not a single expression of disaffection could be discovered in it. Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner in the Punjab, denied that there was any attempt to seize the fort, or that a spirit of mutiny pervaded the corps, or the army, although, as he admitted, there was a general feeling of disappointment at being deprived of a high rate of pay, and partial and individual mutiny. Sir Charles Napier took upon himself to disband the regiment and replace it by a Ghoorka corps.

Digitized by Google

This was the assumption of an authority which belonged only to the Government, but, in the absence of the Governor-General, it was overlooked by the Vice-President in Council, and the order was confirmed. But the interference of the Commander-in-chief with the allowances of the native army, was too grave to be overlooked. On the 15th August, 1845, Lord Hardinge had established the rule that, whenever the price of provisions forming the aggregate of the sepoy's diet exceeded three rupees and a-half a-month, the difference should be made up to him in money. Sir Charles Napier declared the rule to be unjust and impolitic, and ordered a previous scale of compensation, which had been superseded, to be revived. The benefit it gave to the sepoy did not exceed an ana a-month, but it was an infringement of the constitutional prerogative of the Government. Sir Charles endeavoured to justify this act by the assertion that he was surrounded by a hostile population, that the whole army of the Punjab, numbering 40,000 men, was infected with a spirit of mutiny, that the empire was in great peril, and that he was constrained to act with promptitude and decision. Lord Dalhousie maintained that although mutiny did exist, it was partial, inconsiderable in degree, and comprised only a few. He denied the existence of a spirit of mutiny among 40,000 native sepoys in the Punjab, and quoted a letter written by Sir Charles only four days before he penned this sweeping condemnation, in which he affirmed that he had seen most armies in the world, but had never seen a more obedient and orderly army than that of India; and in reference to the mutiny, stated that he "would not allow a few malignant and discontented scoundrels to disgrace their colours and their regiments by an insolent attempt to dictate to the Government what pay that Government should give its soldiers." Lord Dalhousie officially informed him that "the Governor-General in Council would not again permit the Commander-in-chief, under any circumstances, to issue orders which should change the pay and allowances of the troops serving in India." Sir Charles immediately placed his resignation in the

Digitized by Google

hands of the Ministry. The question was referred by them to the Duke of Wellington, who had selected Sir Charles for the command in India, and he performed what he called "the painful task of reviewing the whole transaction" with a stern impartiality. He came to the conclusion that although there were murmurings and complaints at Wuzeerabad, there was no mutiny. There was no evidence that a general spirit of mutiny pervaded 40,000 troops in the Punjab. The 66th having mutinied at Govindgur, piled its arms under the orders of its officers, was marched out, disbanded, and sent into the Company's provinces in this very month of January, 1850, with the knowledge of the whole army, and there had not been a sign of any movement in favour of the mutinous regiment. There was no sufficient reason for suspending the rule of compensation of the 15th August, 1845. The Governor-General was right, and did no more than his duty in expressing his disapprobation of the act of the Commander-in-chief, and could not with propriety have acted otherwise. This decision of the great Duke settles the historical merits of the question.

CHAPTER XLI.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION—TRANSACTIONS WITH NATIVE PRINCES, 1848—1854.

LORD DALHOUSIE had not been four months in India before the question of the succession to the raj of Sattara, a small principality under the Bombay Presidency, with a revenue of about fifteen lacs of rupees a-year, was brought before him. The eventual absorption of this unit in the great Indian empire was not, in itself, a matter of any political significance, but it has acquired a degree of importance from the use which has been made of it to denounce Lord Dalhousie's administration, for what has been designated "his policy of annexa-

Digitized by Google

tion," of which this was the first instance. It derives still higher importance from the fact that it was on this occasion that the Court of Directors and the Board of Control enunciated, for the guidance of the Government of India, their decision regarding the rights connected with adoption in the families of native princes.

Origin of Sattara, 1818.

On the deposition of the Bajee Rao in 1817, Lord Hastings resolved to make a suitable provision for the family of Sèvajee, the founder of the Maharatta greatness, which had been deprived by the Peshwa of all power, and held in durance upon a small pittance. His chief object was "to conciliate the Maharatta tribes to the new order of things, and to establish among them a counterpoise to the remaining influence of the former brahminical government." In the following year a treaty was concluded with the raja, which recited that, in consideration of the antiquity of his house, the British Government had determined to invest him with a sovereignty sufficient for the maintenance of his family in comfort and dignity. The territory of Sattara was therefore ceded to him, his heirs and successors, in perpetual sovereignty, to be held in subordinate co-operation with the British Government. The restrictions imposed on him were of the most stringent character. He was not only denied all political power, but forbidden to hold any intercourse with foreign potentates, even for the purpose of forming matrimonial alliances, otherwise than through the Resident. The historian of the Mahratta and Pindaree war, who was also the political secretary to Government during this transaction, records that the authority of the raja could never be looked on as independent, and that his court differed little from the pageant courts of Delhi, Moorshedabad, or Arcot. The raja himself considered that he was little better than "the manager and farmer of a district," and, soon after his accession, made efforts to throw off these restrictions, and gradually proceeded from one intrigue and one act of contumacy to another till, in 1839, the Government of India deemed it necessary to depose

Digitized by Google

him. His brother was raised to the throne and administered the country with great vigour and beneficence for ten years; he died on the 5th of April, 1848. He had repeatedly applied for permission to adopt a son, but the Resident was constrained to reply that it was beyond his province to grant it. Two days before his death he again expressed his fervent hope that the lad he might adopt would be recognized as his heir and successor to the throne. Two hours before he breathed his last, a boy whom he had not previously thought of, was brought to him at hap-hazard; the ceremonies of adoption were performed, and a royal salute was fired. The adoption was complete according to the rules of the Hindoo shasters, and secured to the soul of the deceased prince in the next world all those benefits which it would not otherwise have enjoyed. The adopted son succeeded to all the personal property of the raja, but it rested with the British Government to determine whether he should succeed also to the sovereignty of Sattara. Within a week of the decease of the raja, Sir George Clerk, the Governor of Bombay, recorded a Minute, recommending that he should be acknowledged as the raja. Sir George had long been distinguished in India as the foremost champion of the native chiefs, and was regarded as the most influential member of that school of Indian politics which holds their interests to be of paramount importance; his opinion in the present case, therefore, renders it redundant to notice the Minutes of any inferior pen, either in India or in England. He stated that the treaty was one of perpetual friendship and alliance between the English Government and his Highness, his heirs and successors. Such expressions ordinarily meant a sovereignty which should not lapse for want of heirs so long as there was any one who could succeed, according to the usages of the people to whom the treaty referred. The lad now adopted was such a successor. Sir George admitted that the sanction of the paramount state was by custom required to render an adoption to a principality valid, and that in the

Opinion of Sir George Clerk, 1848.

Digitized by Google

time of our predecessors, this was made a source of profit to the treasury. "Can we here," he enquired, "without injustice, exercise that right of sanction, to the extent of prohibiting adoption? The raja engaged, it is true, to hold his territory, in subordinate co-operation with the British Government, but there are many instances of states held subordinate to another in all external relations, the duration of whose sovereignty it was never supposed could be justly terminated by the superior state in default of direct heirs. . . . . If it be inconsistent with justice to refuse confirmation to the act of adoption, it was useless to enquire whether it was better for the interests of the people or the empire."

Opinion of Mr. Willoughby, 1848.

Sir George Clerk was succeeded in a few weeks by Lord Falkland, who concurred with the other members of Council in taking a directly opposite view of the case. The most important Minute recorded on this occasion was that of Mr. Willoughby, in which all the stores of knowledge he had accumulated during a long period of service in high political appointments were brought to the discussion, and the question of adoption by native princes was examined with great skill and impartiality. Of such importance did Lord Dalhousie consider this dissertation as to pronounce it the text book on adoption. Mr. Willoughby's opinion in this case carries greater weight from the circumstance that, on a subsequent occasion, his views regarding the rights of one of the native princes were diametrically opposed to the decision of the Governor-General. The establishment of the raj of Sattara, he observed, was an act of spontaneous liberality on the part of the British Government, which, in 1818, had as much right to retain the Sattara territory as any of the other districts which belonged to the Peshwa. Whatever right the raja possessed must be looked for in the treaty of 1819, under which the state was created. That treaty conferred the sovereignty on the raja and on his heirs and successors; but, in his judgment, it did not confer the right to create an heir by adoption, on failure of natural heirs. Admitting, however,

Digitized by Google

the reverse, for the sake of argument, to render the adoption valid for succession to the state in such cases as Sattara, the confirmation of the paramount authority in India was essential, according to immemorial and almost universally admitted custom. The custom was, in fact, so ancient and so universal, as to have all the effect of law. Of this the late raja was fully conscious, and he invariably acknowledged that the adoption could have no political value unless the sanction of the British Government could be obtained. Mr. Willoughby then proceeded to state that he was no advocate for the extinction of the native states by violent or unjust means; but when they fairly lapsed to us, as they would have done to the Government which preceded us, he would not allow them to be perpetuated by adoption, except under special circumstances. The question now before the Council was whether, after the lapse of thirty years, we were likely to obtain the same advantages which were anticipated by Mr. Elphinstone, and whether they were of sufficient moment to render it expedient that the Sattara state should be reconstituted for the benefit of a boy hitherto brought up in poverty and obscurity. Those who regarded the native states as safety-valves for the discontented, and for particular classes, for whom it was difficult to find employment under our rule, would probably decide on re-creating the state. Those, on the other hand, who coincided with him in opinion, that British rule should on every fair occasion be extended, under the opinion expressed by Mr. Macaulay, that "no Government exists of which the intentions are purer, or which on the whole has done more to extend civilization and promote the happiness of the human race than the Company," would take an opposite view of the case, and determine, in virtue of our prerogative as lords paramount, not to confirm the adoption.

Lord Dalhousie's researches, 1848.

The Minutes of Sir George Clerk, in favour of adoption, and of Lord Falkland and the two members of the Bombay Council in opposition to it, were submitted to Lord Dalhousie. The question was alto-

Digitized by Google

gether new to him, and to assist his judgment, he called for all the information which could be obtained from the public records of the opinions of official functionaries, the instructions received from the Court of Directors, and the precedents which had been established, on the subject of adoption. He found that four years before, on nominating a successor to the vacant throne of Holkar, Lord Hardinge had distinctly informed him that the chiefship should descend to the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, in due succession, from generation to generation, to the entire exclusion of heirs by adoption. He found that Sir James Carnac, the Governor of Bombay, who described himself as "a strong and earnest advocate for upholding the native states of India," when employed in placing the late raja on the Sattara throne, had recorded that he was childless and, at his advanced period of life, was not likely to have any children, and that as there was no other party who could claim the succession by hereditary right, the Sattara state would lapse to the British Government, unless, indeed, it should be judged expedient to allow this line of princes to be continued by the Hindoo custom of adoption. He found that Sir John Malcolm had stood alone in advocating the expediency of giving the sanction of Government to adoptions, and that, on the ground of making them a source of profit to the state. His successor in the chair at Bombay had, however, taken a different view of the question, and it was referred to the Court of Directors. They had previously reminded the Government of India that their sanction was requisite, not indeed to the validity of an adoption, or to the enjoyment of the private rights it conferred, but to enable the adopted son to succeed to the chiefship. In reply to the reference they stated: "We are unable to frame any more precise directions for your guidance in such cases than that whenever it is optional with you to give or withhold your consent to adoptions, that indulgence should be the exception, and not the rule; and should never be granted but as a special mark of favour and approbation." The principle thus laid down by the public autho-

Digitized by Google

rities in England was subsequently exemplified by refusing to allow the chiefs of Mandave and Colaba the privilege of adoption on the failure of natural heirs, and annexing their territories, while they rewarded the chief of Sanglee for his loyalty and attachment to the British Government, by permitting him to perpetuate his sovereignty by this process.

Lord Dalhousie's conclusions, 1848.

After a careful examination of these documents and precedents, Lord Dalhousie came to the conclusion that as a general rule, established beyond cavil and doubt, and sanctioned by the supreme authority in the empire, it rested with the sovereign power, on the death of the holder of a fief without issue, to permit its continuance by adoption, or to annex it to the state; that adoption by such a prince of any individual was valid as regarded his private property or possessions, but insufficient to constitute him heir to the principality, until it had been confirmed by the sovereign authority. In the case of Sattara, the British Government possessed this absolute power to grant or to refuse adoption as the creator of the raj in 1819. If the late raja had left an heir of his own body, no question could have been entertained of the perfect right of such an heir to succeed to the throne; but the death of his Highness without heirs natural, having rendered the throne vacant, the territory should be held, according to law and practice, to have lapsed to the paramount state. He agreed with Mr. Willoughby regarding the policy of taking advantage of every just opportunity which presented itself of consolidating the territories that already belonged to us, and of getting rid of those petty intervening principalities, which might be a means of annoyance, but could never be a source of strength. He remarked, that by incorporating Sattara with our own possessions, we should acquire continuity of military communications, increase of the resources of the state, and uniformity of administration in matters of justice and revenue over a large additional tract. He added, "In my conscience, I believe we should ensure to the population of the state a per-

Digitized by Google

petuity of that just and mild Government they have lately enjoyed, but which they will hold by a poor and uncertain tenure, if we resolve to continue the raj and to deliver it over to the Government of a boy, brought up in obscurity, selected for adoption almost by chance, and of whose character and qualities nothing whatever was known to the raja who adopted him."

General principles of Lord Dalhousie, 1849.

Seven years before the question of Sattara was presented to the Government of India, the Governor-General and his Council in Calcutta recorded their unanimous opinion that "our policy should be to persevere in the one clear and direct course of abandoning no just or honourable accession of territory or revenue, while all existing claims of right are scrupulously respected." Lord Dalhousie embraced the opportunity of the Sattara Minute to record his entire concurrence in the views of his predecessor. "It was his strong and deliberate opinion that in the exercise of a sound and wise policy, the British Government is bound not to put aside or to neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves, whether they arise from the lapse of subordinate states by the failure of all heirs of every description whatever, or from the failure of heirs natural, when the succession can be sustained only by the sanction of the Government being given to the ceremony of adoption according to Hindoo law. The Government is bound on such occasions to act with the purest integrity and the most scrupulous good faith. Wherever a shadow of doubt can be shown, the claim should be at once abandoned. But when the right to territory by lapse is clear, the Government is bound to take that which is justly and legally its due, and to extend to that territory the benefit of our sovereignty, present and prospective." The most liberal provision was made for the Sattara family. The ranees and the adopted son were allowed to retain property to the extent of sixteen lacs of rupees, and valuable landed estates, and likewise received an annual pension of a lac of rupees.

Digitized by Google

Decision of the home authorities, 1849

The whole question was referred to the Court of Directors, together with the Minutes which had been recorded in Calcutta and Bombay. Sir George Clerk had stated in his Minute that it would be convenient to the Governments in India, and acceptable to the people, if the "determination of the present question should lead to the declaration of fixed principles for the regulation, under the authority of the British Government, of successions in default of heirs." The Court, with the concurrence of the Board of Control, accordingly communicated for the guidance of the Government of India, the fixed principle upon which all such questions were to be decided, in the following clear and explicit terms: "By the general law and custom of India, a dependent principality like that of Sattara, cannot pass to an adopted heir without the consent of the paramount power; we are under no pledge, direct or constructive, to give such consent; and the general interests committed to our charge are best consulted by withholding it." This memorable despatch was dated the 24th January, 1849.

Berar; death of the raja, 1853.

Nearly five years elapsed without any occasion for the application of the law of succession thus laid down by the supreme authority of the empire, when the raja of Jhansi died on the 21st November, 1853, and the raja of Nagpore three weeks after. It has been stated in a former chapter that the treachery of the raja Appa Sahib, in 1817, and in the succeeding year, placed the state of Nagpore at the mercy of the British Government. Lord Hastings generously restored it to the royal family and seated a youth on the throne, placing him during his minority under the guardianship of his mother, Baka bye, a woman of great spirit and intelligence, and entrusting the administration to Mr. Jenkins, the Resident. The raja died twenty-seven years after, without any heir or successor, lineal, collateral, or adopted. Mr. Mansell, the Resident at Nagpore, at the time of his decease, had repeatedly pressed the subject of adopting a son on his attention for two years, but he always manifested

Digitized by Google

the greatest aversion to the subject. Neither had his widow, who, according to the usage peculiar to this state, enjoyed the privilege of adoption without the injunction of her dying husband, expressed any desire to take advantage of it. Mr. Mansell, who was one of the advocates of perpetuating native dynasties, recommended that the British Government should appropriate half the public revenue to its own use, and place the management of the state in the hands of Baka bye, then in her seventy-fifth year. In case the selection of this lady should not be approved by the Governor-General, he mentioned the names of "two other pretenders to the throne," one of whom "had a delicate constitution, but had not suffered from any serious illness for the last three years;" the other was "a violent and dissipated youth." Lord Dalhousie recorded an elaborate Minute on the subject, in which he discussed it on the ground of right, and of expediency. He observed that there existed no person whatever, who, either by virtue of treaty, or by the custom of the Bhonslay family, or according to Hindoo law, or the Mahratta interpretation of that law, could claim to be the heir and successor of the deceased raja. "We have not now to decide any question which turns upon the right of a paramount power to refuse confirmation to an adoption by an inferior. We have before us no question of an inchoate, or incomplete, or irregular adoption, for the raja has died, and has deliberately abstained from adopting an heir. The state of Nagpore, conferred on the raja and his heirs in 1818 by the British Government has reverted to it on the death of the raja without any heir. The case of Nagpore stands wholly without example. Justice and custom and precedent leave the Government wholly unfettered to decide as it thinks best. Policy alone must determine the question whether the sovereignty of the state which was conferred on a Goojur in 1818 shall be conferred on somebody else as a gift a second time." The conclusion to which he came was that the gratuitous alienation of the state of Nagpore in favour of a Mahratta youth, was called for by no obligation of justice or

Digitized by Google

equity, and was forbidden by every consideration of sound policy.

British and native administrations, 1819-53.

On the question of expediency he contrasted the condition of the country for eight years under the administration of Mr. Jenkins with its subsequent condition under the raja. Colonel Sutherland, whose long experience and connection with native states, made his testimony of peculiar value, had left on record that the name of Mr. Jenkins—Dunkin sahib—was never mentioned by the people without affection, and would be handed down to posterity as that of a great benefactor, and that under his administration the country had become a garden. On the other hand, Mr. Mansell described the late raja as "absorbed in the society of low followers, in the sports of wrestling and kite-flying, in cards, singing, and dancing, and in the vulgar conversation and mean pursuits of his dancing girls." Eight years before his death, one of his concubines had brought him to a confirmed habit of drinking, and this vice alone, against which the Resident had repeatedly remonstrated, was sufficient to disqualify him for the government. He manifested an invincible distaste for business, and never left the zenana without reluctance. His chief object was to fill the privy purse from bribes, fines, confiscations, and compositions. He was completely in the hands of the most unprincipled favourites, who put up justice to sale, and plundered the country. He contented himself with signing and sealing documents which awarded decisions to those who payed best; and "all his thoughts and actions resembled those of a village chandler."

Anxiety of the people for the British rule, 1837—1853.

It was no matter of surprise that the people should long for the halcyon days of British rule. Mr. Cavendish, the Resident in 1837, had affirmed that while any questioning of the right of adoption at Gwalior, Hyderabad, and Lucknow, would be improper, because those territories were not bestowed on the present or former rulers by the British Government, Nagpore, Sattara,

Digitized by Google

and Mysore were created by the Hon. Company, and none but a descendant of the grantee could advance any claim to the succession according to the law of the land. He asserted that all the agriculturists, bankers, and shopkeepers would prefer the British rule to that of any native government, and hail with joy the return of their former masters; he therefore recommended the annexation of the country. His successor, Major Wilkinson, who had always upheld the cause of native princes, asserted, on the contrary, that Nagpore stood precisely in the same position as Gwalior, and advised that permission should be given to the raja to adopt a son; but, with an amiable candour, acknowledged that the course proposed by Mr. Cavendish would be most beneficial and gratifying to the mass of the population, who desired nothing so much as to be placed under the British Government; and this, he remarked, "was not a mere idle wish for change, inasmuch as they had experienced the blessings of the rule of British officers. The only people who would regret a change, were a few favourites about the Court and their followers." Mr. Mansell, who advocated the continuance of a native government, because, among other benefits, it would conciliate the prejudices of the native aristocracy, stated that "if the public voice were polled, it would be greatly in favour of escaping from the chance of a rule like that of the late chief in his latter years."

Lord Dalhousie's conclusions, 1858.

On a review of this body of evidence supplied through a period of twenty-five years, by a succession of officers, who differed from each other in political opinions, Lord Dalhousie came to the conclusion that the interest and happiness of the people forbade the British Government to bestow the sovereignty of Nagpore afresh on a native ruler. He then passed in review the repeated failures which had attended the experiment of setting up native sovereigns to govern territories we had acquired by the issue of war. "We set up a raja at Mysore; and we have long since been obliged to assume the direct management of the country, and to take out of the raja's hands the power which he was found

Digitized by Google

unfit to wield. We set up a raja at Sattara, and twenty years afterwards we were obliged to dethrone and exile him. We set up a raja at Nagpore; we afforded him every advantage a native prince could command; an able and experienced princess was his guardian and the regent of the state. So favoured, so aided, he has, nevertheless, lived and died a seller of justice, a miser, a drunkard, and a debauchee." He said he was well aware that the continuance of the raj of Nagpore under some Mahratta rule, as an act of grace and favour on the part of the British Government, would be highly acceptable to native sovereigns and nobles in India; but "I place the interests of the people of Nagpore foremost among the considerations which induce me to advise that the state should now pass under British Government, for I conscientiously declare, that unless I believed that the prosperity and happiness of its inhabitants would be promoted by their being placed permanently under British rule, no other advantages which could arise out of the measure, would move me to propose it." He then touched on the benefits which might accrue from the annexation. The essential interests of England would be promoted if the great cotton fields in the valley of Berai were placed under British management, and a railroad constructed to convey its produce to the port of Bombay; the dominions of the Nizam would be surrounded by British territory; a direct line of communication would be established between Bombay and Calcutta, and the British empire materially consolidated.

Minutes of Colonel Low and Mr. Halliday, 1853.

Of the three members of Council the proposal of Lord Dalhousie was controverted by only one, Colonel—now Sir John—Low. He had been employed for thirty years in political posts of the highest importance in various parts of India, and acquired a large fund of experience, which gave no ordinary weight to his political opinions. He was distinguished by the amiability of his disposition; and his long intercourse with the native princes and chiefs had created a benevolent sympathy with their feelings

Digitized by Google

and wishes, which it was impossible not to respect, even when it appeared occasionally to be carried to excess. It was his opinion that as there was no limitation in the treaty, the late raja was placed in the same position as Appa Sahib before he made war on the Government, and when he occupied the throne by hereditary right; that the raja possessed the same power and authority as any other independent prince; and that the annexation of the territory would contravene the spirit as well as the letter of the treaty. He admitted that the great mass of the people ought to be grateful for the system of government projected for them by the Governor-General, and would certainly be better governed than under the late raja; but the men of high rank and influence would be less contented. He considered that we had no right to hinder the widows and relatives from settling the succession to the vacant throne according to their customs and wishes, and that they and the principal men ought to be invited to state their claims openly. He believed that the confidence of our native allies in our good faith had been shaken by the conquest and occupation of Sinde, by our attack on Gwalior, and by the annexation of Sattara; and that the incorporation of Nagpore would fill them with a dread of what might happen on their own death. Mr. Halliday, also a member of Council, affirmed that on the question of right there could be no difference of opinion, and he proceeded to say, "Here is a territory actually without a claimant, a territory full of available resources of a kind important to the Government of India, and still more so to the people of England; a territory whose teeming population is avowedly hoping, praying, expecting to be taken under our Government, as no imaginary blessing, but as a boon of which, having full experience, they know and appreciate the value; and at such a juncture, we, forsooth, are to be deaf to their call, and deaf also to the claims of our own countrymen, and leave the widows and relatives and principal men to settle this affair; or, still more, to invite and solicit them to take some spoilt boy from a nursery, or some

Digitized by Google

obscure and uneducated youth from a village, and place again in such hands the rod of iron with which the late raja had so scourged the nationality out of his unfortunate subjects, that they are now impatient for the rule of the stranger rather than suffer such another tyranny. We are to give this right of succession as a thing of little worth to some 'son of a daughter of a sister of the adoptive father of the late raja,' or to some 'son of a son of a sister of the adoptive grandfather of the late raja,' for such is the designation of the relationship to the raja of the two youths suggested by the Resident, of whom he says one is a dissipated and violent youth, while the best he can say of the other is that he has not suffered from any serious illness for the last three years."

Decision of the Court of Directors, 1854.

The Court of Directors, on receiving information that the Government of India, acting on the instructions conveyed in their despatch of the 24th January, 1849, had annexed the territory, expressed their entire concurrence in its views and proceedings. They remarked that Nagpore was a principality granted, after conquest, by the favour of the British Government to the late raja, on hereditary tenure. He had left no heir of his body; there was no male heir who, by family or hereditary right could claim to succeed him; he adopted no son; there was not in existence any person descended in the male line from the founder of the dynasty; and they had no doubt of their right to resume the grant. As to the policy of resumption, they agreed with the Governor-General that regard for the interest of the people themselves who had suffered under Mahratta rule, and prospered under British administration, forbade the maintenance of the sovereignty of Nagpore, now that it was at the free disposal of the British Government.

Sale of Property, 1854.

With regard to the property of the late raja, Lord Dalhousie stated that although he considered it to be fairly at the disposal of Government, he desired that it should neither be alienated from the family, nor given up to be squandered by the ranees. He directed

Digitized by Google

that jewels, furniture, and other personal property suitable to their rank having been allotted to them, the value of the remainder should be realized, and constitute a fund for "the benefit of the Bhonslay family." The ranees resolutely resisted the surrender of the gold mohurs which were deposited in their private apartments, and the Governor-General considered it desirable rather to fail in obtaining them than to force an entrance for that purpose. The live stock was at once sold off at Nagpore, and the jewels and other articles of value were sent round to Calcutta to be put up to auction. There can be little doubt that this mode of disposing of the jewels and gems which had been accumulated by that royal house for more than a century, by the hammer of the auctioneer, was revolting to the feelings of the native community, and open to all the censure which has been passed on it; but the proceeds, amounting to twenty lacs of rupees, were considered a sacred deposit for the use of the family. According to the most recent reports from the province, one-fourth of the entire revenue of the country still continues to be devoted to the support of the royal family and its retainers and dependents, notwithstanding the death of some of the annuitants.

Jhansi, 1854.

The raja of Jhansi died on the 11th November, and the question of the succession to this principality was brought before the Government of India. To revert to its former history: On the first connection of the Government with Bundlecund, in 1804, a treaty was concluded with Sheo Rao Bhao, a tributary of the Peshwa, who is described in some documents as an *aumil*, or governor of this small territory; in others, as simply the collector. All the rights of the Peshwa in the province were ceded to the Company in 1817, and the Governor-General, adverting to the fidelity and the attachment of the family to British interests "resolved to declare the territory to be hereditary in the family of the late Sheo Rao Bhao." A treaty was concluded with his grandson, Rao Ramchunder, and his heirs and successors; and the title of raja was conferred on him in 1832. He died in 1835,

Digitized by Google

having adopted a son the day before his death; but Sir Charles Metcalfe, then Governor of Agra, refused to acknowledge his right to bequeath the sovereignty by adoption, and placed the lawful heir descended from Sheo Rao Bhao on the throne, though a leper. He died in 1838, and was succeeded by Gungadhur Rao, the only surviving son of Sheo Rao Bhao, under whose mismanagement the revenues, which had once amounted to eighteen lacs of rupees, dwindled down to three. Gungadhur died in 1853, and in like manner adopted a son on his death-bed, and thus secured all the spiritual benefits which depended on that rite; but his widow, a woman of no ordinary talent and of high spirit, undeterred by the previous refusal of the British Government to admit of succession to the kingdom by adoption, demanded the sovereignty also for the lad. Lord Dalhousie, before he formed any opinion on the subject, referred to the Minute recorded by Sir Charles Metcalfe, as Governor of Agra, which was universally considered a conclusive authority on the law of succession in Bundlecund. Sir Charles was known to be favourable to the maintenance of native thrones and to the principle of adoption, but in reference to that particular province stated, "With regard to chiefs who merely hold lands, or enjoy public revenues under grants, such as are issued by a sovereign to a subject, the power which made the grant, or which by conquest or otherwise had succeeded to its rights, is certainly entitled to limit succession according to the limitation of the grant, which in general confines it to heirs male of the body, and consequently precludes adoption. In such cases, therefore, the power which granted or the power standing in its place, would have a right to resume on failure of heirs male of the body." Jhansi was one of these principalities. Gungadhur Rao had left no heir of his body. There was no male heir of Rao Ramchunder, or of Sheo Rao Bhao, or indeed of any raja or soobadar who had ruled it since the first relations of the Company with the state. Lord Dalhousie, therefore, came to the inevitable conclusion that the right of the British Government to refuse to acknow-

Digitized by Google

ledge the present adoption, was placed beyond all doubt, by the existence of precedents, by the general law of succession established by the home Government in their despatch of the 24th January, 1849, and by the *lex loci* of the province, as expounded by Sir Charles Metcalfe. He added, that the British Government would not derive any practical advantage from the possession of this territory, as it was of no great extent, and the revenue was inconsiderable; but the possession of it as our own would tend to the improvement of the general internal administration of Bundlecund. Colonel Low, who had a fortnight before vigorously opposed the annexation of Nagpore, recorded his entire concurrence in the opinion of Lord Dalhousie, and added: "The native rulers of Jhansi were never sovereigns; they were only subjects of a sovereign, first of the Peshwa, and latterly of the Company. . . . I consider that the Government of India has now a full right, if it chooses to exercise that right, to annex the lands of Jhansi to the British dominions." The Court of Directors decided that, as the state of Jhansi was a tributary and dependent province, created by the British Government, the adoption should not be recognized as conferring any right to succeed to the rule of the principality; and as the chief had left no descendants and no descendants of any preceding chief were in existence, the state had lapsed to the British Government. Three years afterwards, on the outbreak of the mutiny and the extinction of British authority in the north-west, the ranee took a fearful revenge for her disappointment, and put to death every European man, woman, and child she could seize.

Enumeration of annexations, 1855.

These are the three cases of absorption by lapse which constitute the "annexation policy" of Lord Dalhousie. In annexing the remainder of the Punjab, he followed the example of Lord Hardinge, who had previously annexed two of its provinces; in both cases it was the necessary result of a war brought on by unprovoked aggression. The retention of Pegu was only a continuation of the policy of Lord Amherst, who had deprived the "Golden-

Digitized by Google

foot" of three provinces, thirty-six years before. In each case, the act was admitted to be a just and legitimate retribution for the arrogant encroachments of the court of Ava. The sovereignty of Oude was extinguished under special orders from home, contrary to the advice of Lord Dalhousie. He has been censured for having coveted the annexation of Kerowlee, which is said to have been rescued from his grasp by the firmness of the Resident, Colonel Low, and of the Court of Directors. A passing notice of the transaction may be useful in the interests of truth. Kerowlee was a small Rajpoot principality, the raja of which adopted a son just before his death. Colonel Low, the Resident, recommended that the adoption should be recognized. Sir Frederick Currie, one of the members of Council, recorded the same opinion in a Minute in which he pointed out the essential distinction between the ancient principalities of Rajpootana and a state like that of Sattara, "the offspring of our gratuitous benevolence," where we resumed only what we had bestowed. Lord Dalhousie drew up a fair and impartial statement of the arguments on both sides the question, and concluded with the remark that, taking into consideration that British supremacy was established in Kerowlee in 1817, the arguments in favour of causing it to lapse, appeared to him to preponderate; but he referred the question to the Court of Directors. They decided that their despatch of the 24th January, 1849, had reference only to a "dependent principality" like Sattara, and not to the case of a "protected ally" like the raja of Kerowlee. Sumbulpore has also been inserted in the schedule of annexations, but the raja was simply a zemindar, with whom there never was any treaty at all, and who in February, 1827, signed a document in which he acknowledged that "he had been vested with authority from the Government to administer justice, and to conduct the police duties within the limits of his estate." On his death, the office was conferred on a second raja, probably a member of his family, and eventually reverted to Government. Sumbulpore was an

Digitized by Google

extensive region in the centre of India, thinly inhabited by wild tribes, scarcely less barbarous than they were when the hero of the Ramayun marched through it on his expedition to Ceylon, and recruited his army, according to the epic, with monkeys. Brahmins and rajpoots had contrived to establish their authority in it, but it was a land of forests and swamps, and withal so pestiferous that an appointment to it was dreaded by the European officers of Government like a sentence of death. The revenue amounted to 6,000 rupees a month, and there was little temptation to annex it. Minor estates were also from time to time escheating to the state; but the three acts on which the administration of Lord Dalhousie has been assailed by his censors, are, the annexation of Sattara, Nagpore, and Jhansi, by the "dread and appalling doctrine of lapse." His conduct has been described as resembling "the acts of brigands counting out their spoil in a wood, rather than the acts of British statesmanship," and he has been pronounced to be the "worst and basest of rulers."

Extent of Lord Dalhousie's responsibility, 1855.

To form a correct judgment on this subject, it must be recalled to mind that this "annexation policy," as it has been somewhat insidiously termed, was neither created nor enlarged by Lord Dalhousie. On the first occasion on which the question of lapse came before him, he found the principle of annexation supported by all the members of Council in Calcutta and Bombay, with the exception of Sir George Clerk, and, on the ground that it was in accordance with the immemorial law and usage of India. He found also that it harmonized with the practice which had received the sanction of the Court of Directors and the Board of Control. That it was in unison also with his own views of public policy he fully admitted; but he refrained from acting upon it till a reference had been made to England, and until a declaration of the "fixed principle" which was in future to guide the proceedings of the Government of India on this important question, was received from the highest authority in the empire. If any censure is to be attached to the adoption

Digitized by Google

of this policy, a much larger share of it would, upon every principle of justice, fall on the masters than on the servant. It has been asserted that these annexations created alarm among all the princes of India, and shook their feeling of loyalty to the Company; but it appears to be forgotten that the application of this law of succession was confined to extremely narrow limits. It did not affect any of the Mahomedan princes of India; and the Court of Directors and Lord Dalhousie explicitly declared that it was applicable exclusively to those subordinate and dependent principalities which had been created by the "spontaneous generosity" of the British Government, and not to any of the independent sovereigns. It was, in fact, restricted to the states of Mysore, Sattara, Nagpore, and Jhansi, and possibly to one or two others of minor account. If any alarm had arisen in the minds of the independent princes, a few words of explanation from the Resident would have been sufficient to dispel it.

Opposition to annexation, 1855.

The principle of refusing to allow these dependent states which had lapsed by the failure of natural heirs to be continued by adoption, was vigorously combated by a considerable body of the European functionaries of Government. Ever since the days of Edmund Burke, who has been justly described as a worshipper of ancient dynasties, there has always been a succession of men in the Direction at home, and in the public service abroad, prepared to advocate the cause of native princes as princes, without any particular reference to the merits or demerits of their government. Among them may be enumerated some of the most eminent men connected with the administration,—Tucker, Malcolm, Henry Lawrence, Clerk, Outram, Sleeman, Low,—all animated with an honourable and chivalrous feeling of respect for the royal families of India. Considering the inevitable tendency of our progress to level them, it is an honour to our national character that there should be men in authority eager to defend their interests; and it is impossible not to admire the feeling even when it may appear to interfere with interests

Digitized by Google

of a higher character. On the other hand, there has always existed a body of public men at home and in India, equally eminent and high-minded, who consider British rule an inestimable blessing to the people, and are anxious to substitute it for native administrations, wherever this can be effected with a scrupulous regard to the claims of justice and equity. The feelings of one party incline to the wishes and susceptibilities of the princes of India; those of the other to the interests of the people. The opinions of both are equally entitled to respect, and nothing can be more preposterous than to introduce into the controversy a charge of indifference to national faith. These antagonistic principles have been alternately in the ascendant, and they will probably continue, in turns, to sway our counsels, till the British empire in India reaches the same point of consolidation as that of Rome under the Cæsars, and these independent principalities expire from the extinction of every element of vitality, and the princes themselves subside into the position of grandees.

Arguments for permitting adoption, 1855.

Two arguments have been adduced for permitting these subordinate and dependent states to be perpetuated by adoption. A native administration is said to be more beneficial to the people than any we can construct, and more congenial with their wishes. There are doubtless many provinces within the wide circuit of our empire where it would be more adapted to the wishes of certain classes than a government of foreigners. If, as has been asserted, our Government is the purgatory of the upper ten thousand, it is still the paradise of the million. But the allegation that native rule is more advantageous to the general interests of the country, or of the people, is contrary to all the lessons of the past. Even when a minor prince has enjoyed all the benefit of careful training under our own auspices, for one instance in which he has proved a beneficent ruler, there are half-a-dozen in which he has sunk into the sensualities of the zenana, and abandoned all care of his people. Well has it been observed that "the education which tells on

Digitized by Google

kings, like the education that tells on all public men, is the education of the world," and not of the school room. If, moreover, a government with the purest intentions, and acting under a sense of severe responsibility, cannot promote the prosperity of a province more effectually than such rulers as the rajas of Mysore or of Nagpore, or the king of Oude, we can have no business in India. The other argument advanced for the perpetuation of lapsed kingdoms, is the opportunity it affords of employment for native talent, which does not exist under our rule. It carries much weight; it will be readily admitted that this has been the opprobrium of our administration ever since the days of Lord Cornwallis. Under the government of his predecessor, Mr. Hastings, the native *fouzdar* or commissioner of Hooghly received an allowance of 7,000 rupees a-month. Lord Cornwallis declared the natives unfit for any situations of trust, and reduced the salary of the best paid among them to 50 rupees. The empire of Akbar rose as rapidly as our own, but as he subjugated province after province, he enlisted the nobles and the aristocracy in his own service, and they became the firmest supporters of his throne. But with the progress of our empire a blight comes over the prospects of the higher and more influential classes of native society; there is no room for their aspirations in our system of Government, and they sink down to one dead level of depression in their own land. The remedy for this error is to be found, not in perpetuating the power, so constantly abused, of native princes, simply on the ground of finding employment for native intelligence and ambition, but in incorporating these qualities in our own administration, with all necessary safeguards against the defects of the oriental character, and thus to combine the gratification of the upper classes with the welfare of the lower.

Nabob of the Carnatic; previous history, 1801—53.

It was during the administration of Lord Dalhousie, and with his concurrence, that the dignity and privileges of the Nabobs of the Carnatic became extinct. The proceedings of Lord Wellesley

Digitized by Google

regarding the Carnatic have been circumstantially detailed in a former chapter, and it is only necessary to recall to the memory of the reader that in consequence of the treasonable correspondence of the Nabob Mahomed Ali, and his son, with Tippoo Sultan, which was discovered in 1801, the Governor-General declared all the treaties made with the Nabob by the British Government null and void, and all the right and claim of the family to the musnud of the Carnatic annihilated. Lord Wellesley was disposed at first to abolish the nabobship altogether, but he eventually resolved to place one of the family on the throne with a liberal allowance. This arrangement was reduced to the form of a treaty which, as originally drawn up at Madras, contained expressions which implied that the British Government was simply recognizing a right already in existence, and not conferring a new right, but these words were, at once, struck out by Lord Wellesley, who explicitly declared that the Nabob owed his elevation, not to any existing right, for it had been entirely forfeited, but to the generosity and liberality of the British Government. The treaty stated that the allowance made to the Nabob of 213,421 pagodas a-year should be considered a permanent deduction in all times to come from the revenues of the Carnatic. But Lord Wellesley, expressly and intentionally excluded from this document, as he had done from that which related to Mysore, the words heirs and successors, which were invariably inserted by him in the treaties made with the independent princes of India. It was always understood at Madras and Calcutta that Lord Wellesley did not, in this case, contemplate a treaty such as is usually executed between parties who are in a position of equality but simply a personal settlement with one who was in a subordinate position. The Nabob enjoyed a titular dignity, but was obliged to reside in Chepauk Palace, under the guns of Fort St. George, and he was not allowed to travel to any distance without permission. He received royal salutes, and he was placed above law, but being without duties or responsibilities, he passed his life in

Digitized by Google

debauchery, and the palace became the pest of the Presidency. The Nabob died in 1819, and the Government of Madras placed his son on the throne. On his death in 1825, Sir Thomas Munro continued his infant son in the nabobship, but he died childless in 1853, when his uncle, Azim Jah, laid claim to the prerogatives and the allowances of the post, as his collateral heir.

Opinion of the Governor and Council of Madras, 1853.

Lord Harris, the Governor of Madras, recorded an elaborate Minute on the subject, which became the basis of subsequent arrangements. He did not consider that the Company was bound by any act or deed to maintain the hereditary succession of the Nabobs of the Carnatic, as long as the family continued to exist. On the death of the Nabob in 1819, the Government of Madras had pointed out to the Governor-General that they were not authorized by the terms of the treaty to acknowledge any successor. Though the musnud had been allowed to descend in two instances in regular succession from father to son, this circumstance did not bind the Government to continue it when that succession had failed, as in the present instance. He objected, likewise, to the perpetuation of the nabobship, on the ground of expediency. The semblance of royalty without any of its power was a mockery of authority which must necessarily be pernicious. It was not merely anomalous, but prejudicial to the community that a separate authority, not amenable to the laws, should be permitted to exist. This pageant, though hitherto harmless, might at any time become a nucleus of sedition and agitation. Moreover, the habits of life, and the course of proceeding of the Nabobs had been morally most injurious, and tended to bring high station into disrepute, and favoured the accumulation of an idle and dissipated population in the chief city of the Presidency. He recommended that the royal privileges and immunities hitherto conceded to the Arcot family should cease, that a handsome allowance should be given to Azim Jah, that Government should undertake to settle his debts, and that the salaries of

Digitized by Google

the principal officers should be continued for their lives. Sir Henry Montgomery, the member of Council at Madras, seconded these views, and stated in his Minute that the affairs of the Nabob were irretrievably embarrassed; that his palace was mortgaged, and that his debts were computed at fifty lacs of rupees, for the payment of which the creditors were importunate. Those who were responsible for the peace and the welfare of Madras were unquestionably the best judges of what was necessary to secure it, and the opinions thus expressed by them of the importance of extinguishing the noxious influence of Chepauk Palace, could not fail to carry weight with the Government in Calcutta and in England.

Opinion of Lord Dalhousie, 1853.

Lord Dalhousie, who happened at the time to be at Madras on his way to Rangoon, recorded his entire concurrence in the arguments and conclusions of the Governor and Council. On his return to Calcutta he embodied his views in a Minute, in which he stated that he agreed with Lord Harris and the members of the Government of Madras in holding that the treaty of 1801 was a purely personal settlement concluded between the Company on the one part, and the Nabob Azim-ood-dowlah on the other, without any mention of heirs or successors. The strongest point in the claim of Azim Jah, he said, was that the Court of Directors had, in more than one despatch, alluded to him as the heir of his nephew, but no attempt need be made to evade these allusions, or to weaken the full force of their meaning. They may be readily admitted to indicate an expectation on the part of the British Government that if Mahomed Ghouse should die without children, his uncle Azim Jah would be allowed to succeed him; but to indicate an expectation, or even an intention, was not to recognize or confer a right. These words contained no pledge or promise of the succession; and there had subsequently been too much reason to forego any such intention regarding the claimant or his family. The

Decision of the

Court of Directors with whom the settlement of

Digitized by Google

Court, 1858. the question rested, deemed it expedient to notice the expressions upon which Azim Jah had laid so much stress, of his having been alluded to in a letter addressed to Madras, thirty-six years before, as the "next heir." They observed that the question then before them was not the succession to the musnud, but the appointment of a physician to the young Nabob. As nearest of kin they had spoken of him as heir to whatever could be legally derived by inheritance. After "that earnest deliberation which was due to all questions which could be supposed to involve considerations of public faith," the Court came to the conclusion that the rights of the family were derived from the treaty of 1801, and necessarily limited by its terms, which were exclusively personal to Azim-ood-dowlah; that there was no obligation on the British Government to continue the provisions of the treaty in favour of any collateral heirs, and that it would be highly inexpedient to do so. "The title and dignity of Nabob and all the advantages annexed to it by the treaty of 1801 are therefore at an end." A liberal allowance was made to Azim Jah, besides a suitable provision for the dependents of the family, and he was recognized as the first nobleman in the Presidency of Madras, and allowed to maintain a military guard.

The Nizam and Berar, 1853. The vexatious question of the Hyderabad Contingent was brought to a satisfactory conclusion under Lord Dalhousie's administration, by the transfer of Berar to the management of British officers. To trace this transaction to its origin, it is necessary to observe that by the treaty of 1801 the Nizam was bound to join the British army, in time of war, with 6,000 infantry and 9,000 horse. These troops, however, were found to be worse than useless in the field, and the Resident, Mr. Russell, was urged by the Court of Directors to obtain the consent of the Nizam and his minister, Chundoo-lall, to substitute for them a British Contingent of 5,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and four field batteries. In a former chapter, special reference has been made to this efficient but expensive force, which was over-officered and over-

Digitized by Google

paid, and severely taxed the resources of the Hyderabad state. Its allowances had repeatedly fallen into arrears, and the Government of India, considering itself bound to ensure the payment of a force enlisted under its guarantee, directed the necessary funds to be advanced from the Resident's chest, and they were acknowledged by the Nizam as a debt due with interest to the Company. In 1843, the Resident was again required to make advances, when he was instructed by the Government of India to inform the Nizam that, unless he observed greater punctuality in future, he would be called on to transfer to the Government territory of sufficient value to meet these periodical demands. Small sums were, from time to time, doled out in driblets, from the Nizam's treasury, but not sufficient to cover the pay of the Contingent, or to keep down the interest of the debt. The Resident had repeatedly remonstrated with him on the deplorable state of his affairs. The territory of Hyderabad was sufficiently productive to provide for all the demands of the administration, and to maintain the court in affluence and splendour; but it was impossible to prevail on the Nizam to attend to public business, and he had for a long time left the Government without a responsible minister. The hordes of foreign mercenaries he persisted in maintaining, to the number of more than 40,000, devoured his revenues, oppressed his people, and even held his own sovereign power in check. Lord Dalhousie was determined that this unsatisfactory state of things should not be allowed to continue, and he brought his clear head, practical judgment, and resolute will to the solution of the difficulty.

Lord Dalhousie's movements, 1849.

In August, 1849, he directed the Resident to intimate that arrangements must be made to liquidate the debt by the 31st December, 1850. This communication produced no result. At the appointed period, not only had no attempt been made to cope with the debt, but it was augmented to seventy lacs by fresh advances on account of the Contingent. Accordingly, in May, 1851, Lord Dalhousie addressed a letter to the Nizam desiring him

Digitized by Google

to make over certain districts, specified in a schedule, to cover the past and the growing obligations. The Nizam, who had been apprized of the transmission of the communication, anticipated its official delivery by appointing Seraj-ool-moolk, the grandson of the great Meer Alum, and the ablest man at the court, to the office of minister, and likewise pledged his royal word to discharge half the debt immediately, and the remainder by the 31st October, as well as to appropriate the revenue of certain districts to the payment of the Contingent. The first instalment was paid by money raised at an exorbitant premium; the second was neglected; the pay of the Contingent again fell into arrears, and the officers and men were driven to the bankers, who accommodated them at the rate of twenty-four per cent. Again were advances made by the Resident, and the debt, notwithstanding the recent payments, swelled to fifty lacs of rupees. Four years of evasion on the part of the Nizam had worn out the patience of Lord Dalhousie. In one of those lucid and exhaustive Minutes in which he was accustomed to record the ground, and to furnish the justification, of his decisions on public questions, he examined the subject of the Contingent in a moral and practical point of view. The sole cause, he observed, of all the discord which vexes the two states is the Contingent, for which the Resident maintains a constant wrestle with the Dewan, and which transforms the representative of the British Government, by turns, into an importunate creditor, and a bailiff in execution. If the Nizam had at any time refused, or should now refuse to maintain the Contingent any longer, the Government of India could not make good any right by treaty to enforce the continuance of it. Our simple right was to require 15,000 infantry and cavalry of the Nizam's army in time of war, and this provision has been made to justify our requiring the Nizam to uphold a force of 7,000 men and twenty-four guns, officered by British officers, and controlled by the British Resident, in time of peace. Neither the words nor the intention of the treaty can

Lord Dalhousie's Minute, 30th March, 1853.

Digitized by Google

be held to warrant such a construction of its obligations. But, the rulers of Hyderabad, having for forty years consented to maintain this field force on certain terms, are bound faithfully to fulfil those terms as long as the original consent to its maintenance is not withdrawn. The present Nizam, though he has enquired in moments of irritation why the Contingent was kept up when there was no war, has steadily resisted every attempt to reduce it by a single bayonet or sabre. It has been upheld of his own free will. However anomalous in its origin, it has become a practical necessity, and the Nizam has repeatedly declared that his government cannot be carried on without its assistance. It is required as a counterpoise to the large and disorderly body of foreign mercenaries who continually threaten the peace of the country. Lord Dalhousie proceeded to remark that the Government owed much consideration to the Nizam, for having allowed the Contingent to be maintained at a larger cost than was necessary to secure him all the advantages of it, and that it would be worth the while of Government and worthy of its dignity, to obtain an adjustment of a question which disturbed the amity of the two states, even at a considerable sacrifice. He therefore proposed the draft of a treaty to be submitted to the Nizam, which should place the Contingent on a definite and permanent footing, determine its strength and its duties, provide for its punctual payment, and effect an equitable settlement of the interest and principal of the debt. Including the pay of these troops, the interest of the debt, and certain annuities to native chiefs guaranteed by the Government of India, the annual payments of the Nizam amounted to between forty-two and forty-three lacs of rupees, and Lord Dalhousie proposed to require the transfer of territory yielding between thirty-six and thirty-seven lacs. By this arrangement the Nizam would benefit to the extent of six lacs of rupees a-year, besides being exempted from the repayment of a debt of nearly half a crore of rupees. If, remarked Lord Dalhousie, the Nizam should determine not to continue the Contingent, and refuse to make

Digitized by Google

assignments for its support, the whole force must be broken up; but the Government of India cannot consent at once to let loose on the country a large body of trained troops, and thus endanger its peace and security. The reduction must necessarily be gradual, and the assignment of districts must still be made to meet the expenses of the force while the disbandment is in progress, and to secure the liquidation of the debt, both principal and interest. When these objects are accomplished, the districts will be restored to the Nizam. Sir Frederick Currie and Mr. Lowis, the two members of Council, fully acquiesced in the sentiments and the propositions of the Governor-General's Minute.

Conclusion of the Treaty and its results, 1853.

The Nizam manifested the deepest reluctance to the proposal. He said there were two royal maxims which he held sacred,—never to part with territory, and never to dismiss soldiers who had been useful to the state. When the Resident presented the draft of the treaty, a long and acrimonious discussion ensued, in the course of which he said that his Highness had only to declare that he did not require the Contingent, and the Governor-General would gradually reduce it, and then restore the districts. The Nizam exclaimed, "I beg you to assure him that I do not want the present strength of the Contingent reduced; I am able and willing to pay it month by month, and I undertake to do so, independent of the minister;" but he had neither the power nor the intention to fulfil these grand promises. The debt of the state amounted to three crores of rupees, borrowed at usurious interest, and its finances had not been in so hopeless a condition for half a century. The minister and the principal officers of the durbar considered the proposed arrangement highly advantageous to the interests of the kingdom, but for a fortnight the Nizam turned a deaf ear to all their representations. Seraj-ool-moolk at length succeeded in purchasing the goodwill of a favourite and confidential valet, who exercised a paramount influence over the mind of his master. The treaty was speedily accepted, but with modifications to suit the

Digitized by Google

wishes of the Nizam. The sovereignty of the assigned districts was still to remain with him, and they were to be made over to the management, not of the Government of Madras or Bombay, but of the Resident at his court, who was to render a faithful account of receipts and disbursements, and to remit the surplus revenue to his treasury. The question which was thus solved by the talent of Lord Dalhousie, and by the skill, firmness, and judgment of Colonel Low, the Resident, to whom the entire management of the negotiations was committed, was one of the most perplexing which had ever been brought before the Indian authorities, and the arrangement was one of the masterstrokes of the Governor-General's policy. It encountered the opposition of that section of the Court of Directors which was given to fondling the sensibilities of native princes, and who, on this occasion, seemed to forget that the question was one for practical statesmanship and not for the fancies of philanthropy. In passing their judgment upon it, the Court of Directors said that they regarded with the greatest satisfaction this mode of settling our pecuniary relations with the Nizam's government; they sanctioned the treaty, and conveyed their cordial thanks to the Governor-General and the officers employed by him. They were fully justified in their approval of it. Seldom has there been a settlement in India from which all parties have derived such equal advantages. It delivered both Governments from those derogatory disputes about money which disturbed the harmony of their intercourse. It relieved the British treasury from incessant but uncertain demands; it absolved the Nizam from the obligations of a debt of nearly half a crore of rupees, and reduced his annual responsibilities in a very material degree, while it bestowed on the people thus transferred to our charge the inestimable benefit of those institutions which had been brought to maturity in the Punjab. The territory thus placed under British control, and brought within the circle of British enterprise, included the great cotton field of Berar, and Lord Dalhousie immediately laid the foundation of a railway for the conveyance

Digitized by Google

of its produce to the port of Bombay. To the inhabitants of that district the assignment brought the age of gold during the civil war in America, while it furnished a grateful supply of the raw material to the manufacturers of England. Two years after the settlement, Lord Dalhousie, finding that the revenues of the districts he had taken over exceeded the requirements, restored territory yielding three lacs of rupees a-year. The treaty was revised by his successor in 1860, when the British Government gave back all the districts which had been surrendered, with the exception of Berar, the revenues of which were found to be sufficient to cover the sum to which the expenses of the Contingent had been reduced, and the whole amount of the debt, principal and interest, was wiped out. The family of the Nizam of Hyderabad, which has not produced a single ruler of even ordinary capacity, since the death of its great founder, has been the most fortunate of all the royal houses of India. At the close of the last century, it was rescued by Lord Wellesley from the ambition and rapacity of the Mahrattas, through the guarantee of British protection. Since that period there has been no diminution of its territory. If Lord Wellesley took over large districts for the payment of the subsidiary force in 1801, and incorporated them with the Company's dominions, they consisted of those which he and Lord Cornwallis had bestowed on the Nizam from the spoils of Tippoo Sultan. If Lord Dalhousie took over another province for the support of the Contingent in 1853, it consisted of the territory with which Lord Hastings had enriched the Nizam from the spoils of Nagpore in 1819. While every other throne in the Deccan has become extinct, the Tartar dynasty founded by Nizam-ool-moolk retains in all its integrity the territory which the Mahrattas had left it seventy years before.

Nana Sahib, 1853.

Bajee Rao, the ex-Peshwa, died at Bithoor, in January, 1853, at the age of seventy-seven. The circumstances connected with his surrender in 1818 have been detailed in a former chapter, and it is only necessary to

Digitized by Google

remark that he did not open a negotiation with Sir John Malcolm until the divisions of the British army were closing upon him in every direction. He was allowed an interview with Sir John, who advised him either to throw himself on the consideration of the British Government, or manfully to resolve on further resistance. "Resistance," exclaimed Bajee Rao, "how can I resist; am I not surrounded; am I not enclosed?" It was in these desperate circumstances that Sir John offered him a pension for himself and his family of eight lacs of rupees a-year. Lord Hastings, who had destined him an annuity of only two lacs, was mortified to find it quadrupled by the pliability of his representative. "I well knew," he wrote to him, "that the vagabond would try every appeal to your kindness, and I thought you might have a little too much sympathy with fallen greatness. It is a condition which ordinarily challenges respect, but when it is the condition of so thorough and incorrigible a scoundrel as Bajee Rao, one sees in it only deserved punishment." Sir John stated in reply, that he was convinced it would not have been possible to obtain his submission on other terms, that the provision made for him was indeed most princely, and far beyond what he had, from his treacherous conduct, any right to expect; but then it was only a life pension. Mr. Prinsep, the Secretary to Government in attendance on the Governor-General, and the author of the History of the Mahratta and Pindaree campaigns, which is the highest authority on these transactions, says: "The principal objection to this arrangement was the extent of the personal allowance provided to his Highness, amounting to no less than £100,000 a-year for life." Mr. Kaye, in his excellent life of Sir John Malcolm, also describes Bajee Rao as a simple annuitant, who drew his pension for a quarter of a century. If any further evidence be required to determine the character of this grant, it is furnished by Bajee Rao himself, who, after having adopted Dhoondoo Punt—Nana Sahib—as his son, repeatedly appealed to the generosity of Government to provide for his family after his death, which he would not have done if he

Digitized by Google

had considered the pension hereditary. Bajee Rao died, at length, after having received the sum of two crores and a-half of rupees, with the reputation of being immensely rich—hoarding was the passion of his life—but his adopted son did not acknowledge an accumulation of more than twenty-eight lacs of rupees. The Nana then petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra to continue the pension, or some portion of it, for the support of the family, but Mr. Thomason discouraged every hope of further assistance, and advised that the retainers should return to the Deccan, but he granted him the town and jageer of Bithoor rent free for life. Lord Dalhousie, to whom the matter was referred, considered that the grant was for life only, and that the family had no further claim on the Government; that Bajee Rao had received the enormous sum of two millions and a-half sterling, out of which he ought to have made adequate provision for them. The Nana then despatched an envoy to London to appeal to the Court of Directors, claiming the continuance of the pension, as a matter of right, grounded on the expression in the original settlement that it was intended for "the Peshwa and his family," which he said was designed to include heirs, both natural and adopted. But this term was used by Sir John simply to distinguish the allowance to Bajee Rao and his family from the separate provision which he made for "his principal jageerdars, for his old adherents, for brahmins of respectable character, and for religious establishments founded or supported by his family." The Nana had the effrontery to assert that this annuity was granted in consideration of the territory, valued at thirty-four lacs a-year, which Bajee Rao had ceded to the Company, and that the enjoyment of the one was contingent on the payment of the other. This demand, more especially on the part of an adopted son, for the continuation of a pension which the grantor declared to be for life only, after a sum of two crores and a-half of rupees had been paid on the strength of it, was universally regarded at the time by all who heard of it in India, natives and Europeans, as the most preposterous and

Digitized by Google

impudent request which had ever been made to Government. It was unceremoniously rejected by the Court of Directors and the Board of Control. The enraged Nana took advantage of the mutiny to obtain his revenge by inflicting barbarities on all the English who fell into his hands, which are not paralleled in the history of crime. It has been whispered that some palliation may be discovered for the atrocities he committed in what is called Lord Dalhousie's breach of national faith in the matter of his pension. But neither in this case nor in that of the ranee of Jhansi is it equitable to infer that the refusal of their claims was unjustifiable simply because an opportunity was subsequently presented to them of wreaking their vengeance on innocent Europeans, men, women, and children. The real character of the annexation of Jhansi and the discontinuance of the pension to Nana Sahib are to be determined upon their own intrinsic merits, and not by a reference to the diabolical crimes of those whose expectations were disappointed.

Mysore, 1799-1856.

It has been stated in a former chapter that the insufferable misrule of the raja of Mysore for twenty years, which culminated in rebellion, constrained Lord William Bentinck in 1831 to assume the entire management of the country. The administration was placed in the hands of General Cubbon, one of the great statesmen of the Company's service, who conducted it for twenty-five years with such efficiency and success, as to surprise even the Government of India. The record of his administration was pronounced by Lord Dalhousie to be honourable to the British name, and to reflect the highest credit upon the exertions of the valuable body of officers by whom these great results had been accomplished. Every department had felt the hand of reform. In that of civil and criminal justice, regularity, order, and purity had been introduced, where, under native rule, caprice, uncertainty, and corruption prevailed. Works of public improvement had been prosecuted with a liberal hand. Taxes had been reduced to the extent of eleven lacs of rupees a-year, and the revenue had nevertheless increased from forty-four

Digitized by Google

to eighty-two lacs. It was, as Lord Dalhousie remarked, to the ability and judgment of General Cubbon, and to his long continued and vigilant superintendence, that the British Government owed, in a great measure, the successful issue of its interposition in the affairs of Mysore. In 1847, the raja requested Lord Hardinge to restore the government to him. A reference was made to General Cubbon, who replied that any improvement that had taken place in the condition and resources of the country, had been effected in spite of the opposition he had met with on the part of the Maharaja and his partisans, and that the conduct of his Highness during his suspension from power, afforded no security that the crisis which induced his supersession, would not recur in the event of his restoration. The request of the raja was, therefore, negatived. In 1856 he made a similar application to Lord Dalhousie, who investigated the question with great assiduity, and arrived at the conclusion that it was impossible to reinstate the raja, pointing out at the same time, that the treaty was personal and not dynastic. The accuracy of this assertion had been impugned, but it has been placed beyond controversy by a reference to the original papers of Lord Wellesley, which show, moreover, by the multiplicity of alterations, the care he bestowed on the wording of the treaty. In the draft drawn up by Colonel Kirkpatrick, the fifth article ran thus:—"The contracting parties mutually and severally agree, that the districts in Schedule C shall be ceded to the Maharaja, and his heirs and successors, for ever, and shall form the separate Government of Mysore." Lord Wellesley struck out the words "heirs and successors," with both pencil and pen, noting in the margin, "this is unnecessary and dangerous." In the fair copy of the treaty he wrote in the margin, "this clause is approved with the omission of the words struck out with the pen," and he attested the note with his signature "Mornington." Colonel Kirkpatrick pointed out to him, that if the guarantee clause of the treaty were allowed to remain, the raja would be placed

Original Treaty of 1799.

Digitized by Google

in the same position as regarded heirs and successors as the Nizam; to which Lord Wellesley replied, "strike it out." In the original draft of the subsidiary treaty it was stated that "it should be binding on the contracting parties, and their heirs and successors, as long as the sun and moon should endure." Lord Wellesley again struck out the words "heirs and successors," but left in the oriental flourish about the sun and the moon. These extracts prove to a demonstration that the settlement made with the raja was intended by Lord Wellesley to be strictly personal, and that he carefully excluded every expression which might be supposed to imply a right of hereditary succession.

Subsequent history of Mysore, 1867.

To bring the history of the Mysore raj to a close. The raja solicited Lord Canning to reinstate him in the Government, but it was refused on the ground that "it was his conviction, founded on an experience of the past, that if the authority of the British officers were removed, or even hampered, the peace and prosperity of the country would be at an end." In 1862, the raja renewed his request to Lord Elgin, but with no better success. He then appealed to the present Governor-General, Sir John Lawrence, who upheld the decision of his four predecessors, which was likewise sanctioned by Sir Charles Wood. The raja then proceeded to adopt a son, and required that he should be recognized as his successor in the sovereignty, but, under the rule laid down by the Court of Directors sixteen years before, it was refused both in India and in England. Thus stood the question when the Whigs retired from office in 1866. Even if the treaty with the raja had included heirs and successors, it would still have come within the category of those principalities, like Sattara, the offspring of our "gratuitous benevolence" which the Government had a right to resume on the failure of natural heirs. But in this case, the words heirs and successors had been expressly excluded. This was fully admitted by Lord Cranbourne, the Conservative Secretary of State for India, who stated in the House, "I must express most em-

Digitized by Google

phatically the opinion of Her Majesty's Government that the rights conferred on the Maharaja terminated with his life." The treaty in fact became extinct on his death, and if he left natural heirs, they had no right of succession; the territory reverted to those who had bestowed it. But the present Secretary of State for India has overruled all the decisions of the Government which preceded him, as well as of five successive Governors-General, and has ordered the re-establishment of a native sovereignty in Mysore, and the surrender of the country to the child whom the raja has adopted, on his coming of age. With all the lessons of experience before us, it is difficult to conceive any adequate reason for this new policy, by which the government of four millions of people, after they have enjoyed for nearly fifty years the inestimable benefit of a wise, liberal, and beneficent administration, is relegated to the caprices and oppressions of a native prince. "To supplant," says Sir John Grant, in his Oude Minute, "the British Government of any province by the best native government that ever yet existed, is in one moment to abolish law, and establish arbitrary power in its place." If it was deemed necessary to make some concession to the spirit of agitation which the raja has raised in this country, it might have been sufficient, as an act of grace, to continue the titular sovereignty, and the sixth of the revenues which the raja now enjoys, to the boy when he comes of age, to furnish him with the means of personal gratification. But to sacrifice to a new theory the welfare of a whole people, whose interests we are bound to hold sacred, and to demolish the fabric of prosperity we have been building up for half a century, is so repugnant to every feeling of humanity, that before the period for consummating this policy arrives, it is to be hoped that some future Secretary of State will be found to annul it, as the present Secretary has annulled the decision of his predecessor.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLII.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S ADMINISTRATION—OUDE—ADMINISTRATIVE AND MATERIAL IMPROVEMENTS—CONCLUSION, 1848-1856.

Chronic misrule in Oude, 1801-1855.

THE history of our connection with Oude has been given in preceding chapters down to the time of Lord William Bentinck. No province in India had suffered the affliction of misgovernment for so long a period. The people had scarcely known repose or happiness since the first Nabob, the Khorasan merchant, acquired the principality by treachery. As early as 1779, Warren Hastings remonstrated with the prince on the dissipation of his revenues and the oppression of his subjects. The expostulation was repeated by Lord Cornwallis and by Sir John Shore, but without effect. At the beginning of this century, Lord Wellesley found that "the inveterate abuses which pervaded every department of Government destroyed the foundations of public prosperity and individual happiness," and he pronounced that the only substantial remedy for these evils was to vest the exclusive administration of the civil and military government in the hands of the Company. In 1801 a large portion of the territory was made over to them, and a treaty was concluded with the Nabob, by which he, on his part, bound himself to introduce into his reserved dominions a system of administration conducive to the prosperity of his subjects, and invariably to act in conformity with the advice of the Resident, while the British Government, on its part, engaged to defend his dominions from all foreign and domestic enemies. So little, however, was this pledge regarded by him, that in the course of thirteen years, he amassed a sum of no less than thirteen

Digitized by Google

crores of rupees, though the annual revenue of the country was only a trifle in excess of a crore of rupees a-year. In 1831, Lord William Bentinck, who was distinguished by a desire to maintain the independence of native princes, proceeded to Lucknow, and after describing the flagrant abuses of his Government, assured the king—he had been raised to royal dignity by Lord Hastings—that matters had come to such a pass, that unless prompt measures were adopted to reform them, and to govern the country for the benefit of the people, in conformity with the treaty of 1801, the British Government would assume the entire administration till order was restored, and reduce him to the condition of a pensioner of the state, like the raja of Tanjore and the Nabobs of the Carnatic and Moorshedabad. To impress this warning more deeply on his mind, it was likewise left with him in writing. The Court of Directors, in their remarks on this proceeding, observed that the Oude administration had become progressively more inefficient and oppressive, till the country presented a scene of anarchy and tyranny scarcely paralleled in any other part of India; and they gave the Governor-General the fullest authority to carry out his intentions, and assume the temporary administration of the country. The reformation which this menace produced was, however, very short-lived, and in 1837 Lord Auckland constrained the Nabob to enter into a new treaty for the protection of his subjects, but it contained stipulations which induced the Court of Directors to disallow it, and it became void. In 1847, Lord Hardinge proceeded to Lucknow to remonstrate in person with the king upon the state of desolation to which the country was reduced, and gave him a solemn warning that if at the end of two years there should not be a complete reform in his administration, the Government would assuredly carry into effect the orders received from the Court of Directors in 1834, and deprive him of the management of the country.

Colonel Sleeman, 1851.

Soon afterwards, Colonel Sleeman was appointed Resident, and made a tour through the country to

Digitized by Google

ascertain from personal observation the condition of the people and the character of the administration. The valuable journal which he presented to Government on his return to Lucknow, presented a black record of crimes and misery. The king's army of 70,000 men which, while British troops protected the throne from all domestic and foreign foes, was altogether redundant, received scanty and uncertain pay, and was employed only in preying on the people. As soon as a regiment reached its encamping ground, foraging parties were sent out to rob the villagers of provisions, and to bring in the roofs, doors, and windows of their houses for fuel. In the peaceable parts of the country, the Colonel remarked, not a house was to be seen with a thatched or tiled covering. It was impossible to conceive a greater curse to a country than such a body of licentious, predatory, and disorganized soldiery. The people affirmed that rebels and robbers sometimes spared them, but the king's troops never. There were 246 forts or strongholds in the country, with 476 guns, held by first-class landholders, chiefly Rajpoots. They had converted into jungle large tracts of the most fertile land in Oude, extending many miles round their castles, which became the dens of lawless men who infested all parts of the country, set the Government at defiance, and levied intolerable imposts on all traders and travellers. Within sixteen miles of the capital one landholder had converted thirty miles of rich land into a dense jungle, and erected four fortifications within its circle. One rapacious and brutal revenue contractor had driven off hundreds of the wives and children of the cultivators from entire towns and villages, and had not only sold the cattle and the implements of husbandry but the men themselves, and thus reduced a smiling district to desolation. The king, immured in his palace, was invisible except to his women, singers, musicians, and buffoons, and the minister, whom he sometimes saw, was obliged to succumb to them. His favourite fiddler was appointed chief justice. The chief singer, was, *de facto*, king of Oude; justice was openly bought and sold, and nothing was seen but corruption, from the monarch

Digitized by Google

on the throne to the lowest functionary. Every officer on his appointment was obliged to pay heavy douceurs to the king, to the heir apparent, to the minister, and to every one who was supposed to have interest at court. He reimbursed himself by extortions, all the more severe for being necessarily rapid, since he was never certain of his post for a single day. The king never read a report, and the great object of his ministers and his favourites was to guard him from the cares of business. This system of misrule was in some measure mitigated by the privileges which the sepoys in the Company's service enjoyed of transmitting their complaints through their own commanding officer to the Resident, who was required to take them up, and use his influence, which was all powerful, to obtain redress. With few exceptions, every agricultural family in Oude planted one of its members in the Company's army, and thus obtained the protection of British power. It will, therefore, be no matter of surprise that there should be 40,000 Oude sepoys in the ranks of the native army, when the enlistment made them a privileged class in their own misgoverned country. In presenting his report on the state of the administration to Government, Colonel Sleeman stated that "his friendly feelings towards native states, and his earnest desire to do everything in his power, and consistent with his duties, to support them, were so generally known in India, that his nomination to the Lucknow Residency was considered by all native chiefs as the surest pledge the Governor-General could give of his earnest desire, if possible, to maintain the native sovereignty of Oude in all its integrity." But, he remarked, fifty years of sad experience have shown that the hopes in which the treaty of 1801 was founded, that while the British Government defended the king from all enemies, foreign or domestic, he should by means of his own officers carry out a system of administration calculated to secure life and property, and to promote the happiness of the people, were utterly fallacious. "He did not think that with a due regard to its own character, as the paramount power in India, and to the

Digitized by Google

particular obligations by which it was bound by solemn treaties to the suffering people of this distracted country, the Government could any longer forbear to take over the administration." No reigning family in India, he added, had a juster claim for its loyalty to the protection and consideration of Government; but this claim could not be expected to embrace the privilege of rendering wretched in perpetuity, five millions whose welfare and happiness the British Government was bound by solemn treaties to promote. He advised that on assuming the Government of the country, such provision should be made for the king as would enable him and his family and dependents to live, in perpetuity, in suitable dignity and comfort.

General Outram's report, 1855.

General Outram was appointed Resident at Lucknow in 1854, and directed to institute a minute and searching enquiry into the condition of the people and the administration. He was required to report whether the country was still in the same state which Colonel Sleeman had described, and whether any progress had been made in the correction of abuses which Lord William Bentinck had peremptorily demanded thirteen years before, and for which Lord Hardinge had given the king two years of grace. He reported that there was not only no improvement whatever, but no prospect of any. The vices of the Government were inherent in its constitution, and absolutely incurable. He had no hesitation, therefore, in affirming that the duty imposed on the British Government by treaty could no longer admit of its honestly indulging the reluctance it had hitherto felt of having recourse to the decisive measure of assuming the government. "In pronouncing," he said "an opinion so unfavourable to the reigning family of Oude, I have performed a painful duty. I have ever advocated the maintenance of the few remaining states in India, so long as we can, consistently with our duty as the paramount power and the pledges of our treaties. It is distressing to me to find that in upholding the sovereign power of this effete and

Digitized by Google

incapable dynasty, we do it at the cost of five millions of people, for whom we are bound to secure good government."

Lord Dalhousie's Minute, 1855.

General Outram's report was transmitted to Lord Dalhousie while residing for his health at Ootacamund, and he drew up one of his great and comprehensive Minutes upon it. "For the convenience of those to whom it would belong to decide the future fate of Oude," he made a complete and masterly analysis of the evidence which had been given during a long series of years of the gross and inveterate abuses of power in Oude. He collected together the opinions which had been recorded of our solemn obligations to the people, by those officers of Government who were distinguished by their anxiety to maintain the existing royal families, and then proceeded to state that, if it were not for the presence of British troops, the people would long since have worked their own deliverance. Our Government was, therefore, heavily responsible for having so long tolerated this disregard of the treaty of 1801, and for all the ills and human suffering which had sprung therefrom. The time had now arrived when inaction on our part could no longer be justified, and was already converting responsibility into guilt. "But," he added, "the rulers of Oude, however unfaithful to the trust conferred on them, have yet ever been faithful and true in their allegiance to British power. No wavering friendship has ever been laid to their charge, and they have aided us, as best they could, in the hour of our utmost need. Although we are bound by all the means in our power to amend the lot of a people whom we have so long indirectly injured, justice and gratitude nevertheless require that in so doing we should lower the dignity and authority of the sovereign of Oude no farther than is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of our righteous ends. The reform of the administration may be wrought, and the prospects of the people secured, without resorting to so extreme a measure as the annexation of the territory and the abolition of the throne, and I, for my part, do not advocate the advice that the province of Oude be declared

Digitized by Google

British territory." He proposed, therefore, that the king should retain the sovereignty of all the territory which he possessed, that he should vest the whole of the civil and military administration in the hands of the Company; that an annual stipend should be allotted for the support of his honour and dignity, and due provision be made for all the members of the royal family, besides his own children. The scheme which Lord Dalhousie thus proposed differed from that of Colonel Sleeman only in regard to the surplus revenue, which he proposed to expend entirely for the benefit of the royal family and the people of Oude. Lord Dalhousie, on the other hand, remarked that the revenue of the country might be expected largely to increase under the judicious management of our own officers, and that the British Government would not be justified in making over so considerable a surplus to the reigning sovereign, to be unprofitably squandered in the follies, vices, and excesses of a native court. He considered that the British Government ought to be at liberty to devote to the general advantage of the Indian empire some portion of that surplus of which its own exertions would have been the sole origin and creative cause. He likewise urged, that the arrangement should be perpetual and not transitory. He cited the cases of Hyderabad and Nagpore, where the country had flourished under British management, and had been desolated when restored to the native princes.

Opinions of the Members of Council, 1855.

The members of Council unanimously concurred in the opinion that the Government of India could no longer postpone the assumption of the entire administration, but they were divided in their views regarding the mode in which this was to be effected, two of them siding with Lord Dalhousie, and two others voting for a more radical measure. General Low, who had been Resident at Lucknow, and was thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the people and the Government, and who had, moreover, recently resisted the annexation of Nagpore, declared it to be his deliberate opinion that "the disorders of Oude were of so long

Digitized by Google

standing and so deeply rooted, and the corruption of the public officers so general and so inveterate that there was now no other remedy available for effecting and maintaining a just government over the people of Oude than that of placing the whole of its territory, *exclusively* and *permanently*, under the direct management of the East India Company." In a subsequent Minute he said "the scheme I advocate may be considered harsh towards the king himself, individually, but I contend that it would only be a fulfilment of our own obligations to the people of Oude." He wished, however, to avoid the assertion contained in Lord Dalhousie's Minute, that the king should retain his sovereignty, and desired to substitute for it that he should retain the rank and title, and all the honours heretofore enjoyed by him as sovereign of Oude. He saw no objection to the application of the surplus revenue to the general interests of the empire, but proposed that "after a *bonâ fide* peaceful and beneficial government to the inhabitants of the country should be fully established in the Oude territory, the king should receive an addition of three or four lacs a-year to his income." The Minute of Mr.—now Sir Barnes—Peacock, the legislative Member of Council, was replete with the refinements of legal analysis, and concluded with advising that in conformity with the proposal of the Governor-General, the province of Oude should not be declared British territory, but that the civil and military administration should be vested in the Company. Mr. Dorin earnestly seconded the recommendation of Lord Dalhousie that the transfer of power should be permanent. In support of this opinion he cited the recent case of the raja of Sorapore, who had been carefully trained as a minor by the Governor of Bombay, but when invested with the Government of his principality on coming of age, so completely disorganized the administration in one short year, that no respectable adherent was safe under his auspices. This case of failure, he remarked, "teaches us the bitter lesson that, with all our care, we may still be unable to impress on the minds of the native princes of India, even with education, a proper

Digitized by Google

sense of their responsibilities." But he recommended that the king of Oude should be required to abdicate his sovereignty, and that the province should be incorporated with the possessions of the British Crown. Mr.—now Sir John—Grant, Governor of Jamaica, took up the subject from a different point of view, and brought his extraordinary powers of argumentation to bear on the discussion of it, but he coincided with Mr. Dorin, and came to the conclusion that "the incorporation of Oude with the territories administered by the British Indian Government was the best measure on the whole, which could be adopted for the good government of the people, and that the East India Company had a clear right to adopt it."

Decision of the home authorities, 1855.

These Minutes were transmitted to England. It was a great and important question, and it received earnest and conscientious deliberation for two months, when the Court of Directors, the Board of Control, and the Cabinet, came to the unanimous determination to overrule the advice of Lord Dalhousie, and to adopt what he had endeavoured to dissuade them from, as an "extreme measure," the annexation of the territory and the abolition of the throne; —thus ended the sovereignty of Oude. In communicating his Minute to the India House, Lord Dalhousie had stated, that if they considered his experience of eight years likely to arm him with greater authority for carrying their decision into effect than a Governor-General just entering on the Government, he was ready to undertake the duty, though it would doubtless be assailed by those who were ever on the watch to attack the policy of the Indian Government. On the arrival of the orders from England, he prepared to carry them into execution with promptitude, though so ill as scarcely to be able to move. A body of troops was moved up to the frontier. General Outram was instructed to endeavour to persuade the king to sign the treaty which transferred the government to the Company. He received the communication with an undignified burst of tears, said he was a miserable wretch, and placed his turban in the lap of the Resident; he positively

Digitized by Google

refused to affix his signature to the treaty, and a Proclamation was accordingly issued, declaring the province of Oude to be a component part of the British empire in India. Not a blow was struck in favour of the dynasty; there were no popular risings, and the whole body of the people went over peaceably to their new rulers. An allowance of fifteen lacs of rupees a-year—more than a seventh of the revenues of the country—was allotted for the support of the king and his palace guards. An elaborate scheme of administration, on the model of that of the Punjab, was drawn up by Lord Dalhousie, which embraced every possible contingency in every department. Compared with the plan of government for Bengal drafted eighty years before by the first Governor-General, Warren Hastings—who was in no respect inferior to the last,—it exhibits a proof of the vast progress which had been intermediately made in the science of oriental administration.

Remarks, 1856.

The assumption of the Government of Oude was the fulfilment of a sacred obligation to the people, which had for half a century been acknowledged without exception by all the public officers, not excepting even those who advocated the continuance of native dynasties. The condition of that province was forcibly delineated in an eloquent article which appeared in the columns of the leading journal of England several years before the annexation. "Rebellion and deposition," the writer remarked, "were the correctives of despotism, in India. This remedy we have taken away from the inhabitants of the states still governed by native princes. We give those princes power without responsibility. Our hand of iron maintains them on the throne despite their imbecility, their vices, and their crimes. The result is in most of these states a chronic anarchy, under which the revenues of the state are dissipated between the mercenaries of the camp and the minions of the court. The heavy and arbitrary taxes levied on the miserable ryots serve only to feed the meanest and the most degenerate of mankind. The theory seems in fact admitted, that government is not for the people

Digitized by Google

but for the king, and that so long as we secure him his sinecure royalty, we discharge all the duty that we, as sovereigns of India, owe to his subjects, who are virtually ours." It was from this deplorable condition that Lord Dalhousie's measure was intended to relieve Oude. The abolition of the throne and of the king's sovereignty, were added to it by the home authorities. The equity and justice of the measure were not impaired by the revolt of the province in the succeeding year. The large and powerful body of zemindars, from whose tyranny we were anxious to deliver the people, were not likely to neglect the opportunity of rising against us when they saw our power in Hindostan shaken to its foundation, and Oude left with only a mere handful of European troops,—not a tenth of the number left in the Punjab to maintain our authority on its annexation. Neither was it to be expected that when 40,000 Oude sepoys were in a state of mutiny, their kinsmen and connections, forming, according to the estimate of the Resident, one tenth of the population would remain firm in their allegiance to a foreign power which appeared to be tottering. The rescue of five millions of people from a state of the deepest misery was, notwithstanding the mutiny, an act of benevolence which Lord Dalhousie might justly congratulate himself on having had an opportunity of performing.

Administrative reforms, 1848-1856.

The period of Lord Dalhousie's administration, which extended to eight years, was rendered memorable, not less by administrative reforms and material progress, than by its political results. There was no division of the public service in any portion of the empire, which his keen eye did not penetrate, and into which his strong hand did not introduce substantial reforms. He simplified and lubricated the whole machinery of the Government. He had an unconquerable aversion to what he considered the cumbersome and obstructive agency of Boards, and he considered individual responsibility to be the secret of success in public business. He abolished the Board of Customs, Salt

Digitized by Google

and Opium, and transferred its duties to the Board of Revenue which he, unhappily, left standing, but which the depopulation of Orissa by famine in the present year,—chiefly through its supineness,—will doubtless consign to the tomb. In no branch of the service were his reforms more radical and more beneficial than in the military department. He had not been many months in India, before the approach of the second Punjab war and its exigencies, convinced him of the necessity of a complete reorganization of our whole system of military economy, and he remarked that he would have demolished the venerable and senile Military Board at once, if he did not apprehend that the Court might exclaim, "What is the boy about?" The Board was not only viciously constituted, but loaded with duties, which could not have been efficiently performed by it, even if its organization had been perfect. After a complete investigation of the subject, he withdrew from its control, in the first instance, the Army Commissariat, one of the most important departments of the army, on the efficiency of which its movements in the field depend. It was placed in the hands of a Commissary-General; and the practice of keeping accounts in Persian, which had lingered for nearly a century was at the same time abolished, and they were ordered to be rendered at once in English. Next followed the Stud department, which, at the suggestion of the Court of Directors, was invigorated by unity of control and responsibility. In like manner, the Ordnance Commissariat, with its powder manufactures, gun foundry and gun carriage agency, was placed under a single officer. The Board had likewise been laden with the superintendence of all public works, and in no department of duty had our failure been more palpable and more flagrant. Compared with our Mahomedan predecessors, we had nothing to shew for our dynasty; and it was not inaptly remarked, that if we were obliged to quit the country there would remain no token of our rule but empty soda water bottles. The Court of Directors became at length fully alive

The Military Board, 1850.

Public Works Department, 1852.

Digitized by Google

to the scandal of this neglect, and ordered a Commission of enquiry to be appointed at each Presidency. It was on the receipt of their report that Lord Dalhousie proceeded to reorganize the system, root and branch. The charge of the works was withdrawn from the Board—which was then abolished—and a Public Works Department became one of the institutions of Government, with a separate Secretary, not only to the Government of India, but to that of each Presidency. The responsibility of management was vested in a Chief Engineer, assisted by executive officers and subordinates appointed from England, and youths trained in the College of Roorkee, and at the corresponding colleges founded in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. This was, in fact, to supply the need which had long been felt in India of a civil engineering establishment. To secure the uninterrupted progress of these works, which had previously been prosecuted by spasmodic efforts, it was ordered that a schedule of all the undertakings which it was proposed to commence, or to carry on during the year, at each Presidency, and under each commissionership—now designated the budget—should be submitted at the beginning of the year to the Government of India. Funds were supplied with a lavish hand. The liberality with which Lord Dalhousie fed this department, which had been famished for many years, may be gathered from the fact, that while the entire sum expended during the seventeen preceding years, including the repairs of civil and military buildings, had not on an average exceeded seventeen lacs of rupees a-year, the expenditure in the last year of his administration fell little short of three hundred lacs.

Education, 1848-1855.

The cause of education received special encouragement from Lord Dalhousie. Mr. Thomason, the enlightened Governor of the north-west provinces, had established a Government vernacular school in each revenue division of certain districts under his charge. The experiment was attended with such signal success, that Lord Dalhousie resolved to extend the system to the whole of the north-west provinces

Digitized by Google

as well as to Bengal and the Punjab—but vernacular education has never yet been duly appreciated by those who have hitherto exercised power in Bengal. At the suggestion of Mr. Bethune, the legislative Member of Council, who devoted his time and his purse to the cause of female education, Lord Dalhousie officially announced that the education of females was considered by the British Government an object of national importance, and he was the first Governor-General who had the courage to proclaim this doctrine in the teeth of native prejudices. On the death of Mr. Bethune, he took on himself the support of the female school established by him. It was while engaged in devising plans for the improvement of education that he received the celebrated despatch of Sir Charles Wood, of July, 1854, which has justly been denominated "the Intellectual Charter of India," and which Lord Dalhousie described as "containing a scheme of education for all India, far wider and more comprehensive than the local or the Supreme Government could have ventured to suggest." It embraced vernacular schools throughout the districts; Government colleges of a higher character, a university at each Presidency, to which all educational establishments, supported by the state, or by societies, or by individuals, might be affiliated; and above all, the glorious measure of grants in aid to all schools, without reference to caste or creed. Lord Dalhousie took immediate measures to carry out this large scheme; organized a distinct department of public instruction, and placed it under the responsibility of a Director-General, with a suitable staff of assistants.

Revenue, finance, commerce, 1848-55.

The revenue of India was advanced during Lord Dalhousie's administration from twenty-six to thirty lacs of rupees. Yet, such is the elasticity of the resources of India under our scientific management, that even this large amount has since been augmented fifty per cent., and the income now stands at forty-five crores of rupees. The wars in which the Government of India had been engaged, with little interruption for more than ten years, had absorbed

Digitized by Google

thirty crores of rupees, and entailed an annual deficit; but for some little time after they had ceased there was a trifling surplus. The deficiency which appeared again during the last two years of Lord Dalhousie's rule, was occasioned by the copious expenditure which he authorized in the department of public works for the improvement of the country. During the period of eight years now under review, the commerce of Bombay was developed to an extraordinary extent, and that of Calcutta was doubled. The coasting trade was liberated from every obstruction; many improvements were sanctioned in the various ports from Kerachee to Rangoon, and lighthouses erected in dangerous parts of the Indian and eastern seas. Lord Dalhousie's attention was equally bestowed on the improvement of internal navigation. Steamers were placed on the "silent Indus," for periodical trips between Mooltan and Kerachee, the port of Sinde, destined one day to be the emporium of the trade of the Punjab and of Central Asia, but neither has this undertaking nor that of the guaranteed Company, which has since continued to work it, been marked by success. They have only served to demonstrate more clearly the necessity of completing the Sinde railway to expand the commerce of the Punjab—and, not less, to bring its capital within forty hours of the sea, which is the basis of our security. After the conquest of Pegu, Lord Dalhousie transferred half the steam flotilla of Government to the delta of the Irawaddy, a country abounding in rivers, but destitute of roads. The apprehension which was entertained of interruption to the commerce of Calcutta from the silting up of the Hooghly led him to contemplate the establishment of an auxiliary port, and after careful surveys, he fixed upon the Mutlah, a channel in the Soonderbuns, twenty-eight miles east of Calcutta, which presents every facility of navigation for the largest vessels. Anticipating the future importance of the settlement, whenever its advantages should be fairly developed, he adopted the precaution of purchasing on behalf of Government, and for an inconsiderable sum, the large estate on which stood the site selected for the

Digitized by Google

new port. To the latest period of his administration he laboured earnestly to promote the undertaking; but, by one of the caprices of fortune, the port has been ungratefully named after his successor, who treated the whole project with supreme contempt. Lord Dalhousie likewise gave every encouragement to the project of a bridge across the Hooghly, at Calcutta, which, after the establishment of the railway, became an indispensable necessity. Boring operations were commenced under his auspices; but twelve years have since been allowed to elapse without any further progress in a work, which, if he had been in power, would long have been completed.

Low and uniform postage, 1853.

Private posts had long been established in India by the mercantile community, but Government had thought fit to abolish them under heavy penalties. The postage by the public mail was, for a poor population like that of India, prohibitory, and it was felt to be a severe tax even by the merchants. The importance of conferring on India the boon of cheap and uniform postage which had long been enjoyed in England, had frequently been suggested and discussed, but without any practical result, as is usually the case when there is not a resolute spirit of energy at the source of power. Lord Dalhousie took up the subject with his accustomed zeal, and appointed a commission, consisting of an experienced civilian from each Presidency, to revise the postal system of the empire, and to suggest improvements. Their report was submitted to the authorities in England, and, with their concurrence, Lord Dalhousie proceeded to remodel the postal economy of India, which he placed under one Director-General. He established a uniform rate of half an anna, or three farthings, for letters of a given weight, irrespective of distance, to be levied by means of stamps. He likewise procured a reduction of the rate of postage between England and India, and took no little pride in an arrangement by which, as he said, "the Scotch recruit at Peshawur might write to his mother at John O'Groat's house for sixpence." Of all the improvements of Lord Dalhousie's administration there was none

Digitized by Google

which conferred on the population a blessing so universally felt as the privilege of sending letters through the length and breadth of the land, if necessary, to a distance of two thousand miles, at a cost which placed the means of correspondence within the reach of the poorest.

Lord Dalhousie's journeys, 1848-55.

No Governor-General has ever traversed the vast dominions committed to his care to the same extent as Lord Dalhousie. He visited the Punjab, Madras, Pegu, and Sinde, investigating the state of the country and of the administration with his own eyes, and immediately turning his observations to practical account. Nor did he overlook the Straits settlements of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore which had been visited but once by the head of the state. It was when inspecting the jail at Penang, that he perceived something resembling a gibbet within the walls, and found upon enquiry that it was the gallows on which criminals were executed. He ordered it immediately to be placed without, with the facetious remark that if its position came to be known in England, he should be liable to an impeachment for having permitted an infringement of the most ancient and indefeasible right of an Englishman,—to be hung in public. In order to keep the Government of India constantly and fully acquainted with the state of each division of the empire, he established the rule that the Governor of each Presidency and the chief of each province should annually transmit a report of every event of importance, and of the progress which had been made in the several departments. These reports have proved of the highest value. They have enabled the controlling authorities in England and in India to trace the progress of improvement in each province, year by year, and to compare the state of one province with that of another. They also furnish materials from which the nations of Europe may estimate the extent to which England is fulfilling her mission of civilization in India.

Roads and Canals, 1848—55.

The great importance which Lord Dalhousie attached to the construction of roads and canals

Digitized by Google

has been illustrated in a preceding chapter by a reference to the great works with which he endowed the Punjab. Other provinces and districts were likewise benefited by improved means of communication, but two undertakings deserve to be selected for particular notice. No sooner had Pegu become a British province, than Lord Dalhousie perceived the necessity of connecting it with Bengal by a military road, and thus obviate the objections of the sepoys to the sea. A road was constructed from Dacca to Aracan, but not without a great sacrifice of life and money. To pass from Aracan to Pegu, it was necessary to cross the Yoma range through the Toungoo pass, which presented such formidable obstacles to the engineer that the construction of a road appeared at first an impracticable undertaking. The mountains were lofty; the forests were dense; water was scarce, and labour still more so, and the climate was so pestiferous as to reduce the working season to five months in the year. It was entrusted to Lieutenant Forlong, who succeeded in collecting, embodying, and training a brigade of Burmese labourers, and by his untiring zeal and energy completed the enterprise in two years. Another arduous and important work, executed under the orders of the Governor-General, was the road intended to stretch from the plains of Hindostan to the frontiers of Tibet. The first portion of it extended from Kalka, where it left the plains, to Simla, 7,800 feet above the level of the sea, a distance of about fifty miles, and it was accomplished with a gradient of not more than three feet in a hundred. From Simla the road advanced to Chini, through the valleys, forests, and cliffs of the mighty range of the Himalayas; but the skill and perseverance of the engineer officers, and more especially of Lieutenant Briggs, animated by the deep interest Lord Dalhousie took in the work, surmounted every difficulty. The vale of Chini, the favourite residence of Lord Dalhousie when in the hills, is surrounded by the most sublime scenery in the world, and faces the magnificent Koilas, 21,000 feet above the level of the sea, the fabled paradise of the god Shiva. It is one of the most salubrious and

Digitized by Google

lovely spots yet discovered in India; and produces the most luxuriant grapes at an elevation of 8,700 feet. One object of constructing the road was to establish a convalescent depôt for European soldiers. Nor was Lord Dalhousie without a hope that when it was completed, it might attract the traffic of Tibet, now transported in packs on the shoulders of goats. The Ganges Canal was sanctioned and commenced before the arrival of Lord Dalhousie; but it was advancing at so sluggish a pace, that the sum expended on it from the beginning had not exceeded seventeen lacs of rupees. He considered it a work of paramount importance, and pressed it forward with great ardour, allowing no financial pressure and no exigencies of war to interrupt its progress. The sum expended under his direction in the course of six years exceeded a crore and a-half of rupees. The main stream was for the first time opened by a grand ceremonial, over which Mr. Colvin presided, on the 8th April, 1854. The canal, in its class and character, stands among the noblest efforts of civilized nations. It nearly equals the aggregate length of all the lines of the four greatest canals in France, and its length is five times greater than that of all the main lines in Lombardy. This gigantic work was designed and completed by Colonel Cautley, and seldom has the star of the Bath, which adorns his breast been so richly earned by pacific labours in the service of humanity.

Mr. Thomason. The Ganges Canal was pressed forward by the Governor-General with a spirit of zeal proportioned to the value he attached to it, but the immediate superintendence of Colonel Cautley's labours devolved on Mr. Thomason, the Lieutenant-Governor of the north-west provinces. He was not permitted to see the completion of it; before its waters began to fertilize the country his eyes were closed in death, just as he had been rewarded for his successful administration of ten years by the governorship of Madras. In 1832, he resolved to quit the honourable post he held in Calcutta, in order to make himself acquainted with the economy of our system of government in the interior. He took charge of the large and

Digitized by Google

populous district of Azimgur, on the borders of Oude, where in five years he acquired that intimate knowledge of the working of our institutions which was of the greatest service when he came to rule the Presidency. He was subsequently raised to the post of foreign secretary, and was in attendance, during his tour in the north-west provinces, on Lord Ellenborough, who, with his characteristic discernment of talent, selected him for the Lieutenant-Governorship of the north-west provinces. At the same time, Lord Ellenborough exhibited a noble instance of disinterestedness by relinquishing the patronage of that Presidency, which, as well as that of Bengal, had hitherto been vested in the Governor-General, and transferring it to the officers charged with the responsibility of governing them. Mr. Thomason occupies a very high rank among the great administrators of the Company, and his long, beneficent, and vigorous administration reflected honour on the British name in India. Every cold season, he was in the habit of making a tour through the various districts in his jurisdiction, which gave him a complete acquaintance with the circumstances and wants of the people, and the qualifications of his subordinate officers, and likewise afforded him an opportunity of conciliating the confidence of the most influential men in each district by personal intercourse. He devoted great attention in the revenue department to the establishment of an equitable and moderate assessment, and the definition of boundaries, the absence of which was one of the most fruitful sources of litigation and crime, as well as to the completion of proprietory records, which he laboured to render accessible to the native public. But his warmest and most zealous efforts were directed to the promotion of education, and more particularly of vernacular tuition; and well did he earn the eulogy of Lord Dalhousie, when, in announcing the loss the country had sustained by his death, he said, that "though Mr. Thomason had left no other memorial of his public life behind him, his system of general vernacular education, which is all his own, would have sufficed to build up for him a noble and abiding monument of his earthly career."

Digitized by Google

Railways, 1843 —1853.

The system of railways, which is working a greater and more beneficial change in the social, political, and commercial condition of India than has been known at any former period of its history, is due to the indefatigable exertions of Lord Dalhousie. The question had been for some time under discussion, when Mr.—now Sir Macdonald—Stephenson proceeded to Calcutta in 1843, with the hope of drawing the attention of Government and of the public to its importance. Lord Ellenborough pronounced the whole project to be moonshine; but his temporary successor, Mr. Wilberforce Bird, announced, in an official communication, that the Government was fully alive to the value of the proposal, and would recommend it to the Court of Directors. About the same time, Mr. Chapman endeavoured to secure the patronage of the Bombay Government, and succeeded in laying the foundation of the Great India Peninsular Rail; and Mr. Andrew likewise brought his local knowledge and zeal to the aid of the cause. Mr. Stephenson returned to England and formed a Company for the construction of a railway through the valley of the Ganges, from Calcutta to Delhi. The commercial disasters of 1846 and 1847, which indisposed the public to all railway enterprises, gave his task for some time the appearance of a forlorn hope, but his indomitable energy and perseverance surmounted every obstacle, and enabled him to give a fair start to the East India Railway Company, the largest of these Indian undertakings,—which now works a capital of twenty-five crores of rupees, and embraces 1,500 miles of line. It was manifest that, under the most favourable circumstances, a railway project in so remote and unexplored a field of labour, could not attract public confidence without the material support of Government. But, for a long time, the public authorities in Leadenhall Street and in Calcutta, persisted in limiting the aid of the state to the grant of the land, an insignificant item of expense in India. The eventual assent of the Court of Directors to the indispensable concession of a pecuniary guarantee was secured by the enlightened views and earnestness of

Digitized by Google

Sir James Hogg, to whom the cause of the railway is not much less indebted in England, than to Lord Dalhousie in India. In the year 1848, a guarantee of five per cent. was granted on two short and experimental lines in the neighbourhood of Calcutta and Bombay. Every subsequent concession was, however, preceded by a severe struggle at the India House, and in 1852, the total number of miles sanctioned for the whole continent of India did not exceed two hundred. But the Court came gradually to appreciate the importance of the undertaking, and, in referring the various applications which had been made to them, to the consideration of Lord Dalhousie in 1852, expressed their wish "that India should, without unnecessary loss of time, possess the immense advantage of a regular and well-devised system of railway communications."

Lord Dalhousie's Minute, April, 1853.

The question could not have been placed in the hands of one better qualified to do justice to it. Lord Dalhousie had been at the head of the Board of Trade during the most active period of railway enterprise in England, and had become master of the principles and details of the system. With this pre-eminent advantage he united large and comprehensive views of imperial policy. In the memorable Minute which he transmitted to the Court of Directors on the 20th April, 1853, and which became the basis of the railway system of India, he expressed his hope that the limited section of experimental line heretofore sanctioned by them would no longer form the standard for railway works in India. A glance upon the map, he remarked, would recal to mind the vast extent of the empire, the various classes and interests it included, the wide distance which separated the points at which hostile attacks might at any time be expected, the expenditure of time, treasure, and life, involved in the ordinary routine of military movements, and the comparative handful of men scattered over its surface who have been the conquerors of the country, and now hold it in subjection. This glance would suffice to show how immeasurable would be the political advantages of a system of internal communication by

Digitized by Google

which intelligence of every event should be transmitted to the Government at a speed, under all circumstances, exceeding five fold its present rate, and Government would be enabled to bring the main bulk of its military strength to bear upon any given point in as many days as it now required months. The commercial and social advantages India would derive from the rail were beyond all calculation. Great tracks were teeming with produce we could not transport, and new markets were opening to us under circumstances which defy the foresight of the wisest to estimate their probable value, or calculate their future extent. A system of railways judiciously selected and formed would surely and rapidly give rise within this empire to the same encouragement of enterprise, the same multiplication of produce, the same discovery of latent forces, the same increase of national wealth that have marked the introduction of improved and extended communications in the various kingdoms of the western world. With a railway, moreover, touching every important military station from Calcutta to the Sutlege, native states would be deterred from resorting to combined attacks; and the army now maintained, might, it was probable, be numerically reduced without diminishing our military strength. With the aid of the rail carried up to the Indus, the risks involved in the extension of our frontier to a distance of 1,500 miles from the capital of the country would be infinitely diminished. Peshawur would, in fact, be reached in less time and with greater facility than Moorshedabad, though only seventy miles distant from Calcutta, was reached in the days of Clive. He already anticipated the great improvement in the conveyance of troops from England, which, after the lapse of fourteen years, has been at length consummated. "If," he said, "when the Egyptian railway is completed, permission could be obtained to send troops through Egypt, a corps might leave England after the heat of the summer was over, and be quartered before Christmas on the banks of the Sutlege, without any exposure on its way, and with four months before it of the finest climate under the sun, and, withal, in less time and with less

Digitized by Google

trouble, than it could now march from Calcutta to Benares." He then proceeded to lay down a system of railways for the whole continent which should connect the Presidencies with each other, and form the great trunk lines. He entered into a minute analysis of the various lines which sought the patronage of Government, and pointed out their respective merits and demerits, aud his judgment in each case has been abundantly confirmed by time aud experience. He advocated the construction of the lines by public companies sustained by a Government guarantee, and "directly, but not vexatiously controlled by the Government of the country, acting for the interests of the public on the principle for which I contended" —when at the Board of Trade—" and I may venture, without arrogance, to add, that if the principle had been then more fully recognized, the proprietors of railway property in England, and the suffering public would have been in a better condition now than they appear to be." The bitter experience of the fourteen years which have elapsed since these remarks were recorded by him has served to give them additional weight, and to render this melancholy truth more grievously apparent. But, while England pays the penalty of a hundred millions sterling for the rejection of Lord Dalhousie's advice, India will always have reason to rejoice that the construction of her railway economy fell to the lot of one who combined with a solid judgment and mature experience, the power to turn them to account.

Result of the Minute, 1853.

This communication reached England at an auspicious juncture. The Court of Directors had already indicated their desire to establish a system of railways in India, but they might have been staggered by the boldness and magnitude of Lord Dalhousie's scheme. Happily, the question of the renewal of the Charter was at the time under the consideration of Parliament. Night after night were they assailed for their shortcomings in the management of the national estate entrusted to them, and Mr. Bright, in one of his most fiery philippics, more particularly denounced their

Digitized by Google

neglect to establish the means of communication in India. If any hesitation was felt in Leadenhall Street to sanction the grand proposals of the Governor-General, it soon ceased to exist, and a guarantee upon a capital of twelve millions was at once granted. Upon the broad foundation thus laid by the Governor-General, the Indian authorities at home have raised a noble superstructure. In the course of fourteen years they have increased their guarantee from twelve crores to eighty, for the construction of 4,200 miles of line, and, at the present rate of progression, they will not stop short at a hundred crores. Of the sum expended on these Indian railways, only about three per cent. has been contributed by native capitalists and Europeans in India; the remainder has been supplied by the London Stock Exchange. There are not wanting philosophers who assert that England gains nothing by her connection with India, and would lose nothing by cutting her adrift; but there cannot be two opinions on the inestimable advantage which India derives from her annexation to England, which not only gives her a strong and beneficent government, the security of life and property, and the unrestricted pursuit of wealth and happiness, but enables her to draw from the inexhaustible mine of British capital, whatever resources are necessary for material improvements. It was at one time surmised that the priesthood would take umbrage at this innovation, and that the unchangeable habits and traditional prejudices of the Hindoos would present a serious obstacle to the success of the rail; but these fancies were dispelled before the line had been six months in operation. The brahmins, with all their religious conservatism, hailed it with delight, folded up their caste prejudices, and travelled third class with those whose touch was pollution. At a meeting, moreover, of the Dhurmu Subha in Calcutta, the great sanhedrim of Hindoo orthodoxy, which had petitioned the Privy Council for the restoration of the "sacred rite" of suttee, it was unanimously determined that pilgrims might freely avail themselves of the rail, which, considering that the merit of pilgrimage diminishes in propor-

Digitized by Google

tion to the ease with which it can be performed, was a concession of no small merit. Travelling by rail became at once, and still continues, a national passion, and the number of passengers conveyed during the last year of account, on the 2,500 miles open, exceeded twelve millions, of whom ninety-five per cent. were of the third class.

The Electric Telegraph, 1852.

Another benefit conferred on the commercial and political interests of India by Lord Dalhousie, was the Electric Telegraph. The system owes its existence to the professional enterprise and the persevering industry of Dr.—now Sir William—O'Shaughnessy. After a series of experiments continued for many years in which every failure became a new element of success, he succeeded in laying a line from Calcutta to the sea at Kedgeree, which proved to be of the highest value during the Burmese war. Lord Dalhousie had watched these experiments with deep interest, and on receiving from Dr. O'Shaughnessy in April, 1852, a report of the successful working of the experimental line, lost no time in transmitting his views on the subject to the Court of Directors. He said, " the complete success of the experimental line has added intensity to the ardent desire I have entertained ever since the first report was submitted, to see the main line of electric telegraph between Calcutta and Peshawur, Bombay and Calcutta, and Madras and Calcutta, fairly commenced before I quit India next year. Since then the early establishment of the electric telegraph is all important, alike to the Government and to the community in India; since it has been shown to be practicable, safe, cheap, and profitable, I make my most earnest personal solicitation to the Honourable Court of Directors, that they will authorize the immediate construction of a line or lines from Calcutta to Agra, to Bombay, to Peshawur, and to Madras, either simultaneously, or as soon as possible, in the order in which they are placed in my list. Every thing, all the world over, moves faster now a days, than it used to do, except the transaction of Indian business." He then proceeded to remark, that, what with the number of

Digitized by Google

functionaries, boards, references, correspondences, and the several Governments in India, what with the distances, the consultation of the several authorities in England, the reference to India for further information, and the fresh correspondence arising from it, the progress of any great public measure, even when all were equally disposed to promote it, was often discouragingly slow. To obviate these obstructions, he directed Dr. O'Shaughnessy to proceed to England simultaneously with the despatch, and place himself in personal communication with the Court of Directors, and afford them every information on the subject. Happily, Sir James Hogg was in the Chair at the India House, and he took the same interest in promoting the project of the telegraph as he had that of the railway. It was carried through the various stages with such cordiality and promptitude that, within a week of the arrival of Lord Dalhousie's despatch, it had received the sanction of the Court and of the Board of Control, and a despatch conveying this gratifying intelligence was on its way to India. There had been no parallel to the expedition of these movements within the memory of the oldest functionary at the India House. Dr. O'Shaughnessy returned to India with all the necessary apparatus, and a large staff; the construction of the telegraph from Calcutta to Agra was commenced at the end of 1853, and more than 3,000 miles were covered with the wires in the course of fifteen months. Considering the local difficulties presented by the rivers and the swamps, the jungles and the mountains, Lord Dalhousie was fully justified in affirming that the electric telegraph in India might challenge comparison with any public enterprise which had been carried into execution in recent times, among the nations of Europe or America. The establishment of these telegraph lines, which now extend over not less than 12,000 miles, have fully answered the expectations of the Governor-General by increasing the security of the empire, and multiplying the facilities of governing it. Even his most ambitious anticipations have been realized by the

Digitized by Google

progress of science and the energies of civilization. "It may yet be hoped," he wrote, "that the system of electric telegraphs in India may one day be linked with those which envelope Europe, and which already seek to stretch across the Atlantic." The Governor-General is able now to hold communication with the Secretary of State in London between breakfast and dinner, and a message from New York has been conveyed to Calcutta in less than twenty-four hours. Since the days of Lord Wellesley, who was at one time without intelligence from England for seven months, the appliances for maintaining our dominion in India have been augmented to an indefinite degree. The reasonable apprehensions once entertained that the extension of the boundaries of the empire would increase its insecurity, have vanished before the miracles of modern science. Steam and electricity have given an irresistible strength to European power in Asia. The British Government in India is now prepared for every emergency. If, at the period of the Sepoy mutiny, when the British empire was exposed to the greatest danger it had ever encountered, the Government had possessed the advantages which have since been created,—telegraphic wires pervading every district, and stretching to London, magnificent steam transports on both sides the Isthmus of Suez, with the Egyptian rail as the connecting link, railways radiating from Bombay and extending throughout the country—any number of European troops might have reached the north-west provinces from England within five weeks of the outbreak at Meerut, and the mutiny would have been crushed in the bud.

Character of Lord Dalhousie's Administration, 1856.

Lord Dalhousie embarked at Calcutta on the 6th March, 1856, for England. The whole population, moved by a feeling of admiration of the great ruler who had enlarged and consolidated the empire, and enriched it with solid and lasting improvements, crowded the plain to testify their regret at his departure. Eight years of incessant toil in the service of his country had completely exhausted his constitution, and after a painful and lingering

Digitized by Google

illness of more than four years, he sunk into the grave on the 19th December, 1860. His administration marks a new and important era of civilization in India. The principle of uninterrupted progression which has since characterized the movements of Government is due to the impulse which he communicated to it. To his genius is to be ascribed the grateful fact that the India of 1867 presents so pre-eminent a contrast to the India of 1847. He grasped the largest projects for the improvement of the country, and his views of policy were of imperial magnitude. In all his measures he exhibited a clear intellect, a sound judgment, and deep sagacity, while his firmness of purpose and resolution of character turned all these qualifications to the highest account. He communicated vigour to the administration by exacting a rigid performance of duty from all under him, and he set them the example of his own intense application to public business, to which, by a noble devotion, he sacrificed leisure, ease, comfort, and even health. He investigated every question that came before him with great patience and diligence, and with a scrupulous desire to be right. He marshalled all the arguments which could be adduced on both sides of it, and always recorded weighty reasons for whatever decision he formed, the soundness of which was seldom questioned either by his colleagues, or by the public in India. If he had little imagination for the sensitive feelings of princes who represented ancient and effete dynasties, the absence of it was in some degree compensated by his compassion for their misgoverned subjects; and his administration was distinguished throughout by incessant efforts to benefit the people, whether in our own territories or independent states. The present age is inclined to form its judgment of his administration from the narrow point of his refusal to commit the government of Sattara, Jhansi, and Nagpore to three lads, when he was authorized by the ancient law of India, and the orders of his superiors in England, to incorporate those states with the territories of the paramount power—and thus bestow on them the blessing of a British

Digitized by Google

administration. When this error has had its day, and his administration comes to be surveyed in its broad dimensions, it will be apparent that he exhibited perhaps the finest example which ancient or modern history affords, of what can be accomplished for the benefit of mankind by an enlightened despotism acting upon a large theatre.

Lord Dalhousie's not foreseeing the Mutiny, 1856.

Lord Dalhousie has been censured for not having foreseen the mutiny, and provided against it. It has been noted against him, that the only allusion to the native army in the Minute in which he reviewed his administration was, that "the position of the native soldier in India had long been such as to leave hardly any circumstance of his condition in need of improvement, while the condition of the European soldier, on the other hand, was susceptible of great improvement, and had received it liberally." This had reference to the condition in which the sepoy had been placed by his indulgent masters, not to his feeling towards them. The repeated acts of insubordination exhibited by the sepoys convinced Lord Dalhousie that the native army was no longer to be depended on; but neither he nor Sir Henry Lawrence, nor any other public functionary, ever dreamt that a hundred thousand sepoys, after all the attention which had been bestowed on their comforts, would rise as one man, massacre their officers, and endeavour to subvert the Government. Such an anticipation would have been deemed as wild and improbable as that the United States of America were likely to be plunged into a civil war, and to prosecute it on the grandest scale the world had ever seen. The constitution of the native army was vicious in the extreme. Two fifths of the sepoys were drawn from a single province, and the fraternity thus established in the various regiments, caused every feeling of irritation to vibrate through the whole body. It was impossible for Lord Dalhousie to eradicate this fundamental defect, and the only practicable mode of averting its consequence, was to re-establish the proportion between European and native troops, which from the days of

Digitized by Google

Lord Cornwallis had been considered essential to our safety. He had fixed the proportion at one to three, but not less than one to four; it had now been reduced to the dangerous scale of one to six. To this vital question Lord Dalhousie bent his earnest attention. During the Crimean war the Ministry announced their intention to withdraw two European regiments from India, but Lord Dalhousie raised the strongest objections to it. In his Minute on the subject he stated that "the withdrawal of European troops from India to Europe would weaken the essential element of our strength; if European troops were farther withdrawn for service in the Persian gulf, he could no longer feel, or express, the same confidence as before, that the security and stability of our position would remain unassailed." He confidently submitted to the candour of Her Majesty's Ministers, that "placed as it is amidst distances so vast—amidst multitudes so innumerable—amidst peoples and sects various in many things, but all alike in this, that they are the lately conquered subjects of our race, alien to them in religion, in language, in colour, in habits, in all feelings and interests, the Government of India has had solid ground for the declaration more than once made of late years, that the European force at its command is not more than adequate for preserving the empire in security and tranquillity even in ordinary times," much less then, in circumstances of political difficulty. The regiments were, notwithstanding, withdrawn both to the Crimea and to the Persian gulf, and when the mutiny broke forth, the entire force of European infantry at all the Presidencies had been reduced to thirty-one battalions, and there were only two regiments between Calcutta and Agra, a distance of 800 miles, amidst a population of fifty millions. Treble that number, under a Gillespie or a Havelock would have been sufficient to strike terror into the mutineers, and to restore our authority. On the last day Lord Dalhousie presided in Council, he laid on the table nine Minutes in which he stated his mature and final views regarding the condition of the army and the requirements of the

Digitized by Google

country. He considered it essential to increase the European battalions to thirty-seven, and to reduce the sepoy army by 14,000 men, and thus to protect the Government from the hazard to which it was exposed by the disproportion of the sepoy force.

The annexation policy and the mutiny, 1857.

Lord Dalhousie has been charged not only with having neglected to foresee the mutiny, but with having been himself the cause of it. When the intelligence of this catastrophe reached England, the nation became wild with excitement at the prospect of losing the empire,—in which it had manifested but little interest before, —and swelled with indignation at the atrocities of the sepoys. In this state of feeling, a national victim was required, and it was found in the person of the late Governor-General. Those who had always been opposed to annexation came to the conclusion that it had now produced the result they had long foreseen, of shaking our empire in India to its foundations. "Lord Dalhousie's annexation policy has caused the mutiny," was echoed through the land. A dictum thus pronounced by men who were supposed to understand India relieved the mind from the labour of thought, and became an article of faith. All his services were forgotten in the tragedy which "his lust of territorial aggrandisement" had created; and instead of receiving the ovation due to a great statesman who had enlarged the dominions of England, and planted the seeds of a great civilization among a fifth of the human race, his name became a scandal and a reproach. The investigations which have since been made have tended to show the fallacy of this hasty assumption. That the annexation by war or lapse did not create the mutiny, appears evident from the fact that except in the case of Oude, and the little principality of Jhansi under the instigation of the enraged ranee, none of the annexed provinces manifested the slightest disposition to turn against us in the great crisis. Sattara and Nagpore were tranquil. Burmah was so contented with its new masters that the European corps stationed in it was withdrawn with safety,

Digitized by Google

and the Punjab was mainly instrumental in putting down the mutiny. If the annexations had created any of that alarm for their own possessions in the minds of the independent princes of India, Sindia, Holkar, the Guickwar, or the Nizam, which was assumed, the fairest opportunity was now presented to them for expelling us from India by the revolt of the whole native army, and the extinction of our authority in Hindostan. But so exemplary was their loyalty to the British Government in the day of its extremity, that the advocates of native dynasties have adduced it as one of the strongest arguments for maintaining them. Neither did the sepoys manifest any feeling of irritation at the annexation even of their own province. They took up arms to avenge, not the deposition of their sovereign, but the supposed attempt on their caste. Their relatives and connections included a tenth of the whole population, as well as the great bulk of the agricultural yeomanry, and strange indeed would it have been if they had remained inactive when the sepoy army was triumphant in its rebellion, and the Resident was besieged in Lucknow. The zemindars in Oude, whom it was the object of the incorporation to restrain from plunder and oppression, did in many cases join the malcontents; but during the entire period of the eclipse of our authority in that province, neither sepoy, nor zemindar, nor peasant, appears to have manifested any desire to restore the king to his throne.

The assumed causes of the mutiny, 1857.

It does not fall within the compass of this work to embrace the period of the mutiny. We live, in fact, too near this stupendous event, and the feelings it has excited are still too sensitive, to admit of a calm and conclusive judgment of its origin and character. All that can be expected of the present age is to contribute individual opinions, more or less valuable, for the examination of the future historian. Under this impression, a few brief remarks on the mutiny suggested by this review of our progress in India, are offered to the candour of the reader. It has been surmised that the melancholy events of 1857 are to be attri-

Digitized by Google

buted to a national revolt against our authority. But, independently of the irresistible conclusion that, if this had been the case, we could not have retained our footing on the continent, all the evidence which has since been collected runs counter to this hypothesis. There was no insurrection in any district of any class, however lawless, until after our authority had been extinguished by the triumph of the sepoys, when all the vagabonds were let loose upon the country, and petty and obscure chiefs came forth to take advantage of the confusion. In many districts, on the contrary, natives of influence stepped forward and maintained order, till we should return. Where there were no sepoys, there was no insurrection. Wherever there was revolt, it was the consequence, and not the cause of the mutiny. Neither does the resumption of rent-free tenures, thirty years before, appear to have exercised any influence, as has been asserted, upon the revolt. The province of Behar, with seven millions of inhabitants, of a martial character, had suffered more severely than any other province from the operation of the resumption law; but, with the exception of one district, there was no symptom of disaffection till after the mutinous sepoys had been allowed, by the weakness of the General commanding at Dinapore, to overspread it. We refer to Shahabad, where Koer Sing, the most influential of the zemindars, whose circumstances were irretrievably embarrassed, threw himself into the cause of the mutineers and set the Government at defiance, in the hope of obtaining relief from the process of the courts and the pursuit of his creditors. In two of the most flourishing districts of Behar, containing 10,000 square miles, and filled with landholders whose fathers had felt the heavy hand of resumption, not a finger was raised against our Government, though there was not so much as a corporal's guard left to maintain our power. The mutiny has likewise been attributed to the virtues of our administration, the introduction of female schools, the spread of English education, the railway, the telegraph, and, indeed, to whatever contributed to lessen the

Digitized by Google

importance and authority of the priesthood. But the sepoys knew nothing of English instruction, and none of our improvements had ever reached them. They had been scrupulously guarded by our timidity from everything that could remotely affect their religious prejudices. The railroad was then unknown out of Bengal. It was in Bengal that the influence of the priesthood had been most rudely shaken by a flood of improvements; but the thirty millions of Bengalees never dreamt of rebellion. Moreover, in no province had those measures and those innovations to which the mutiny has been ascribed been introduced with more rapidity and vigour than in the newly conquered province of the Punjab. In the course of seven years, the Lawrences had abolished suttees and infanticide, two practices ardently cherished by the upper classes; they had carried out an extensive plan of resumptions; they had humiliated Runjeet Sing's aristocracy; established English schools; fostered female education, and even introduced the telegraph. But the Sikhs, instead of making common cause with the sepoys, and seizing the opportunity to re-establish their beloved Khalsa, hastened to assist in putting down the mutineers and restoring our authority.

Real cause of the mutiny, 1857.

"The mutiny," says Sir John Lawrence, "had its origin in the army itself; it is not attributable to any external or antecedent conspiracy whatever, although it was afterwards taken advantage of by disaffected persons to compass their own ends; the approximate cause was the cartridge affair, and nothing else." This assertion, made by the highest authority on the subject, is corroborated by irrefragable evidence. Neither the old resumptions, nor the spread of English, nor the attempt to teach females, nor the diffusion of knowledge, nor the railway, nor the telegraph, nor all other causes which have been conjectured, put together, were sufficient to account for the savage mutiny of a hundred thousand sepoys; while the delirious alarm created by the story of the greased cartridges is fully adequate to the effect. The sepoy rebels only for his pay or his caste. The various muti-

Digitized by Google

nies which have been enumerated in this work, between 1763 and 1853, may all be traced to one or other of these causes. The condition of the sepoy as regarded his pay left him nothing to desire, but the most strenuous efforts had been made, after the arrival of Lord Canning, to persuade him that his religion was in danger. It was confidently affirmed that Lord Canning had come out especially pledged to the Queen to make all the army Christians, and had undertaken to have all the native officers to dine at Government House. The King of Oude had left Lucknow, and planted his residence in the suburbs of Calcutta, and his emissaries were incessantly employed in inflaming the minds of the sepoys, as the family of Tippoo had done at Vellore. Then came the report which spread like wild-fire, that the cartridges had been greased with the fat of cows and pigs, with the object of destroying the caste of both Mahomedans and Hindoos. The preposterous tale was believed by ninety-nine out of every hundred sepoys, and a feeling of uncontrollable alarm for their religion and their caste spread through every regiment, from Calcutta to Peshawur, and the whole army was extinguished in a blaze of mutiny.

The Charter of 1853; changes it introduces.

The Charter of 1833 expired in 1853, and a strenuous effort was made in Parliament to wrest the Government of India from the Company, but the Whig Ministry resolved to continue it in their hands, until Parliament should otherwise ordain. The India Bill was introduced in the House of Commons by Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control, in a lucid speech of five hours, which, considering that he had been only a few months in office, and was previously ignorant of India, exhibited great power of analysis, and held out the prospect of an enlightened and vigorous administration, which has since been fully realized. The settlement did not last much beyond five years, and it is only necessary to notice the three chief modifications which it embodied. The number of the Court of Directors was reduced from thirty to eighteen, and the elimination was performed by a most ingenious process of balloting, devised

Digitized by Google

for the occasion. Of the reduced number of Directors, a certain proportion was to be nominated by the Crown. This was no small improvement on the old constitution of the Court, into which it was impossible to obtain admission, except after a laborious and humiliating canvass, often prolonged for years. The most eminent statesmen of the Company's service, men like Malcolm, Elphinstone, and Metcalfe, whose experience and influence would have been invaluable at the India House, were thus excluded from all share in the home Government, from their invincible repugnance to this wearisome mode of election; and the vacancies were filled up with bankers and brewers, and captains of ships, and other city men, who coveted a seat in the Direction for its position and its patronage. Under the new arrangement the Minister was enabled to call to his aid the most eminent of the Company's retired officers. A second improvement consisted in entrusting the Government of Bengal and Behar to a separate Lieutenant-Governor. These provinces contained a thriving population of thirty-five millions, and contributed one-third of the revenues of the whole empire, yet the task of administering the Government was still imposed on the Governor-General, when in Calcutta, even after his imperial functions had been doubled. He was generally absent more than half his time, and this duty devolved upon the senior member of Council, who sometimes happened to be a military officer, rewarded for services in the field, or for reforming the Commissariat at Madras, by a seat at the Council Board and £10,000 a-year. Under this anomalous system there were no fewer than ten successive Governors and Deputy Governors of Bengal in the course of eleven years. Happily Mr.—now Sir Frederick—Halliday continued to hold the post of Secretary throughout this period of permanent instability and inevitable weakness, and it was owing entirely to his local knowledge and experience, his sound judgment and great diligence that the administration exhibited any degree of spirit, or even consistency. His long and eminent services

Digitized by Google

were rewarded by the first appointment to the Lieutenant-Governorship. By a third provision in the Charter, the patronage of the Civil Service was withdrawn from the Court of Directors to make way for the principle of unreserved competition. This system has entirely changed the character of the service, but there has not as yet been sufficient time to estimate its full effect on the general interests of the empire. It possesses many advantages, but is not, of course, without its drawbacks. At all events, the new class of men whom it introduces into the service have the advantage of a high standard of excellence before them. The nomination system, with all its tendency to jobbery, did produce a fine body of public servants, who were invariably distinguished by the honourable bearing and high principle of English gentlemen, and who, with few exceptions, threw their whole soul into their work and took a pride in the efficient performance of it. It is to be hoped that when the higher responsibilities of office devolve on those who have entered the service by competition, they will be found equally competent to represent the dignity of British power among the nobles and princes of India, and equally anxious to conciliate the confidence of the people by their consideration and kindness.

End of the East India Company, 1858.

The East India Company fell with the mutiny of 1857. That catastrophe would equally have occurred, if the government had been in the hands of the Crown. Indeed, the Board of Control had been for more than seventy years the mainspring of authority, and the Court was little more than the medium of making public its decisions. If any portion of the responsibility of the mutiny was attached to the authorities in England, it belonged to the Prime Minister, who, in utter disregard of the experience of the past, and the deliberate opinion of successive Governors-General, and the remonstrances of Lord Dalhousie, withdrew the European regiments, which formed "the essential element of our strength." But when the appalling crisis came, the national feeling sought relief and comfort, both with regard

Digitized by Google

to the past and the future, in changing the organs of government, and the East India Company was required to resign its power. Its work was accomplished, and the cycle of its existence completed. It was created by the Crown, two hundred and fifty years before, for the purpose of extending British commerce to the East; and it transferred to the Crown, on relinquishing its functions, an empire more magnificent than that of Rome. Its political power began with the battle of Plassy; and in the course of a single century, its servants abroad, contrary to every injunction from home, but acting under the influence of an irresistible impulse, extended its authority over the whole continent. A company of merchants in London thus became the instrument, under the mysterious, but wise and benignant agency of Divine Providence, of establishing the British empire in India, with all its attendant blessings, and of leading the way to the extension of European supremacy throughout Asia.

FINIS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INDEX.

a Vol. I.; *b* Vol. II.; *c* Vol. III.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

HARRISON AND SONS, PRINTERS IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY, ST MARTIN'S LANE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google